The Black Cat

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The Night-hawk and the Oriole

by

John Irving Pearce, Jr.

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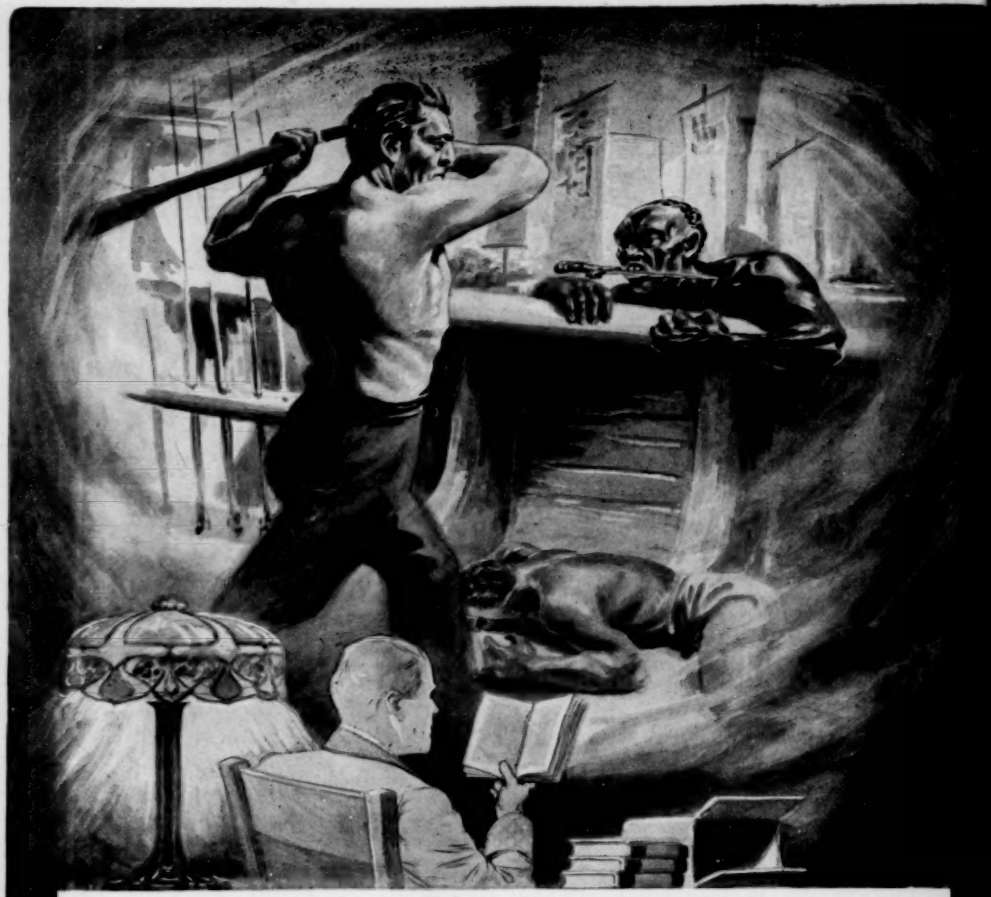

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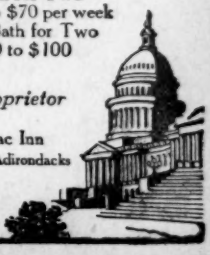

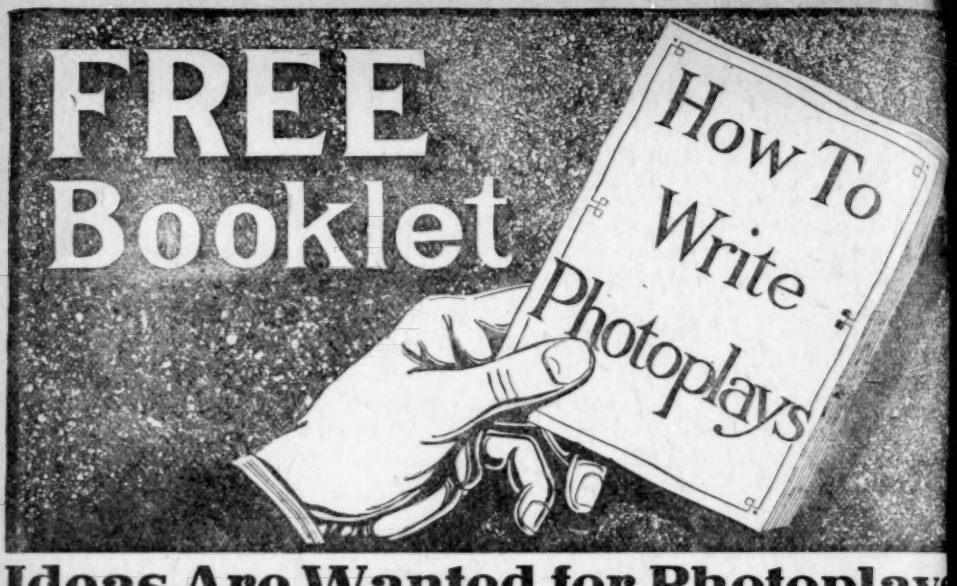

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The Night-Hawk and the Oriole

BY JOHN IRVING PEARCE, JR.

ENJAMIN Franklin Potts, despite the connotation and implied incentive of his christened name, was a natural-born human night-hawk. He did not achieve the Habit, nor was it thrust upon him by person or circumstance—he was just born "that-a-way."

About the time this story breaks, Pa Potts moved all his little Potts and pans to Chicago and rented a cheap flat over a delicatessen store on Thirty-first Street near Cottage Grove Avenue, in that magic burg; for the Call of the Big City had got him. Here Pa Potts apprenticed Benjamin Franklin to the proprietor of a morning paper house-delivery route. He did this with the guileful yet inflexible purpose of breaking his interesting offspring of his Habit of late rising.

But youth has imagination, and the cunning of the fox in covering its tracks, and Benjamin, instead of kicking over the traces, quietly and dexterously cut the Gordian knot by the surprisingly simple expedient of sitting up all night.

Ultimately the fascination of the newspaper game got Benjamin, and within three short years, by hook or crook, he copped out a real job as cub reporter on one of Chicago's morning sheets.

True to his Habit, our crafty young hero chose a morning paper rather than an afternoon publication, because then his work could be done at night. That desideratum first insured, he covered his various assignments blithely, optimistically and intelligently; and if he succeeded from the very start, why, that was just another habit of his.

Coming, as he did, from a two-by-four town in northern Indiana, at first Benjamin had all a country boy's curiosity for new sights of excitement and commotion to be found in the great city, and in particular he took unbounded delight and interest in the spectacular wonders of the Fire Department. He promptly became a fire fan. Later, when he became a reporter, he developed an astonishing ingenuity in securing assignments to cover fires especially, and his previous experience as an inquisitive volunteer fire-worker, with his wide acquaintance among the members of the fire-fighting forces, now stood him in good stead.

It was a keen, bitter night in late November, with a strong, whipping wind from the northeast, damply cold from its unchecked flight across Lake Michigan. A light, watery snow, one of the first of the coming winter, had fallen early in the afternoon. This, half melted by the declining sun, had been frozen into ice by a sudden drop in temperature as night shut in the city. It was a night to delight a chronic fire fan and give

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everyone else the blue chills.

Benjamin Franklin Potts, borne on the blast, blew around the last corner and stamped his numbed feet on the stair-treads as he mounted to the local room of his newspaper to report on his last run. He threw his overcoat on a chair with a playful slam and rubbed his strong, firm, young hands together gleefully.

"Gee, ain't it a lovely night for a blaze?" he crowed; "wind going forty miles an hour and everything frozen stiff! There'll be a fire here somewhere tonight, sure, and a hot one too; I can feel it in my bones! Bet you I get a big story out of one before we go to press with the last edition!"

"Listen to the crazy fire bug!" mocked one of the older reporters. "He'll turn into a regular little pyro-paranoiac and go up in his own smoke one of these dark nights, if he don't watch out!"

Just then the pneumatic-tube boy handed a flimsy to the city editor.

"Hello!" the editor barked. "Here's a stick of fire-stuff just shot in from the City News Bureau. Says there's a bad fire out in a big tenement-house at Twenty-ninth and Calumet. Lot of people in it. Four-eleven alarm expected any minute. Thinks a story's going to break there pretty quick—umh-umh!"

He looked up, and his inclusive glance took in all the members of the local staff present. They watched his face expectantly, but in stoical silence.

"Here, you, Ben!" he ordered aggressively, poking out his bare arm with the flimsy toward him; "take Thompson with you and beat it quick to this! If there's a story in it don't wait to get back here and type it—telephone it in to the rewrite man. If you can't get a car on the jump, get a taxicab! I'll hold the front page for you if you 'phone in it's worth it when you get there." He turned away callously, and the two reporters seized their overcoats and raced down the stairs together.

They flipped an owl-car on the Cottage Grove Avenue line and sped rapidly toward their destination. At Twenty-second Street they caught their first glimpse of the fire's lurid reflection on the sky. In fifteen minutes by the watch, they had covered the entire distance, leaped off at Twenty-ninth Street, and were dashing breathlessly along to the fiery scene, two short blocks west.

Slipping through the police cordon by virtue of their reporters' badges they quickly gained the proper vantage ground for both viewing the big fire and interrogating the battalion fire-marshals in charge. The burning building was of cheap brick-and-pine construction, but quite large.

By the time Ben and Thompson reached the fire-lines, the conflagration had been devastating the structure for nearly thirty minutes, and apparently all the tenants had reached the ground in safety.

Ben shouted to Thompson above the din of the engines and crackling and roaring of the flames.

"Run across that vacant lot and get around to the rear—I'll watch the front!" he screeched. Thompson waved his arm, held the wide collar of his overcoat up before his face as a fire-screen, and jumped away, dodging in and out amidst the salvage jet-

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sam scattered over the lot to the north. Ben turned to the nearest fire-marshal, cupping his gloved hands about his mouth to megaphone him.

"Hello, Chief! How long's the fire been burning?" he asked.

"Pretty near half'n-hour," the marshal answered. "Burnin' ten minutes 'fore first engine could get here. Hell of a time with horses! Just fool luck lot people not killed! Reg'lar firetrap!"

"How far's fire got now? Any chance putt'n it out?"

"First and second floor pretty well gutted; rear stairs going; north side third and fourth floors burning, but not fast! Freak fire! Wasn't for this nasty wind and freeze, had it out a'ready! Straight halls; open space all around—easy to get at! Damn that wind!"

"Anybody hurt—anything to make a story?"

"Naw, nothin' doin' in your line yet, I guess—just lot'a damned work and trouble for us poor firemen, and no thanks!" He spat in disgust.

There came a temporary comparative lull in the howl of the wind, the tumult of noises, and they could speak more at length.

"Well, I'll stick around a while," continued Benjamin; "something might happen yet;—you never can tell! The city editor expects me to get him a story out of this; he's holding the first page open for me after the 'bull-dog' edition gets off the press. How are the walls—safe?"

"Now you're talking! No; they're not! I've just ordered all the firemen off the roof and out of the building."

For a minute or two they stood silent, watching the progress of the fire, and alert for any unforeseen developments.

Suddenly Benjamin touched the marshal's arm and pointed to a window in the north wall, located about midway in the fifth-floor row.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "I saw something white moving in that window just now. Maybe it was a woman's dress. Are you *sure* everyone is out of the building?"

"Sure! They've had lots of time to get out. What you saw was probably some lace curtain, torn loose and flapping about in the draft. There's nobody up there."

Benjamin, his romantic instinct and keen news-scent aroused, turned away unconvinced and moved over to a better view-point from which to scan the window. Soon he perceived a second time, through the gray curling smoke from the windows below, the intermitting flash of white cloth at the same opening. It was gone in a second and he could not be at all sure of its containing any human significance; yet his excitement grew sub-consciously. He walked across the vacant lot and watched the window from the alley, at a different angle and to the windward of the smoke currents. Again he caught the vagrant gleam of white at the window—this time quite distinctly. It seemed to him too solid for a blowing curtain.

Unwilling to encounter the ridicule of the marshal by insisting upon his so improbable surmise that the room back of the window was still occupied by someone, and knowing, too, that that officer, having ordered all hands out, would not risk his men's lives in

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any attempt at a rescue unless absolutely certain the necessity actually existed, he thought quickly, in a quandary as to his own course of action.

He glanced rapidly over the rear of the building, sizing up the situation. Flames were seeping out at both corners, but in the centre, where the narrow, rickety, old-style fire-escape ran up to the roof from the second floor, there was little smoke and no flame. The wind, being from the northeast, drove them away from that point. A fireman's ladder of short length remained conveniently propped against the lower platform of the fire-escape. It seemed easy and safe enough for an athletic person to ascend to the roof there.

He knew he was about to do a most foolhardy thing—that the firemen would certainly prevent him by force if they discovered his dangerous intention in time—that he was risking his life wthout hope of reward, and for a mere instinct, but that did not stop him.

Keeping close to the high back-fence until he arrived directly opposite the ladder, he watched his chance, and, when he had made sure he was unobserved, leaped quickly to its foot and began his perilous ascent. He was half-way to the roof before a pipe-man sighted him and bawled at him to come back or he'd turn the hose on him. Other firemen swore at him, the sight-seers shouted and gesticulated, till the Big Chief himself came running to trace the cause of the sudden uproar.

Benjamin waved just once to show his self-confidence, then clawed upward determinedly and bull-headedly, with his back to the crowd. Five feet from the roof-coping the frail, rust-eaten fire-escape began to creak and sway to his weight.

Another two feet of climb, and it swung outward to his one hundred and fifty pounds of solid brawn, followed by a foreboding cracking sound.

Benjamin intuitively threw the burden of his weight toward the wall and worked his way up the remaining four rungs with the slow caution of desperation. The crowd below now sensed his imminent peril; they gasped and were still, breathless with rising expectant horror.

Slowly, painfully, testing each round as he pulled himself upward, he at last clasped the coping with both hands, and, shifting the main heft of his body to that, trod gingerly the last two rungs, and threw one leg over it. Scarcely had he succeeded in doing so, when the upper story length of the fire-escape snapped off short at the fifth-floor landing and plunged to the ground. He clung there uncertainly a second, then heaved himself strainedly over onto the flat roof.

Ben peered guardedly over the edge of the roof at the broken ladder which now cut off his retreat. For a moment he was really frightened; then he thought of the fire-escape on the south side of the building, and walking across the roof, glanced down. It was still intact.

He looked about him. Thick, belching smoke was ascending through the smoke vent-holes previously cut in the roof by the firemen, but no flames had as yet reached the roof itself. He looked for a scuttle and found one open, at the extreme rear end of the

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building. Here the smoke was lighter and less stifling, and at irregular intervals he could see the floor of the hallway underneath.

Quickly yet carefully he let himself down into the small square aperture, clung by his hands for a trice, and dropped the intervening two yards to the fifth floor.

He bent low to catch his breath and faced resolutely to the front of the building. The only actual flames in sight were licking at the top balustrade of the front stairway, but Benjamin knew the building and that this appearance of safety was deceptive.

Keeping close to the floor, he coughed the strangling smoke from his throat and hurried from door to door along the north line of the hall. Half way of the hall, he came abruptly upon an apartment door that was closed. He seized the knob and pushed bodily, but brought up short against the panels. The door was locked. He pounded on it, and shouted:

"Hey! there! Anybody inside? Open this door!—quick!"

There was a crash, as of some article of furniture overturned, a sound of scuffling, and then a smothered, terrified cry reached him through the locked door:

"I can't! She's taken the key out of the lock and hidden it in her dress and I can't catch her! Beat the door in! Beat the door in!"

Ben's heart leaped to his mouth at this double realization of his prescient expectation. He had not entertained the contingency of finding *two* persons in the ill-fated room. Could he *possibly* save both of them? He must *try*, anyway!

"Stand away from the door!" he warned them; and dropping on his hands, kicked viciously backward with both feet at the lower panel of the door. A few blows split the wood; he tore it out and crawled through the breach into the room. Shut off from the smoke of the hallway, the air here was reasonably clear and more breathable.

A hurried scrutiny showed him the room in confusion, and two women struggling with each other. As he jumped for them, the older and shorter of the two struck the other in the face and breaking away, with incoherent, raving cries, ran toward the open window. The other, for some reason, did not attempt to follow her, but staggered back with extended arms, crying out to him:

"Look out for her; she's crazy with the delirium tremens!"

In the second or two that his gaze and attention were engaged with the younger woman, her companion sprang upon the window-sill and crouched, as for a spring.

Ben turned and saw her too late. With a scream of mad, incongruous defiance, she hurled herself out into the flame-lit night, turning a complete somersault as she dived—like a trapeze performer in a circus dropping into the great net after her act.

Benjamin shuddered and insensibly planted himself before the window, to keep the younger woman away from the horrible sight below. But, strangely, she gave no sign of shock. Instead, she came slowly toward him with her arms held out before her, a dumb, waiting look upon her face.

"Why do we not go?" she asked

wonderingly. "Get the door-key away from mother—it's in the bosom of her waist. Hurry! Where are you?"

He was dumbfounded. Was the the girl, too, crazy? Or had he lost his own senses? She was looking right at him and at the window, too! What could she mean? Then, in a flash, the solution came to him—she was blind!

The sweat broke out on his forehead as he fully comprehended this new turn to his predicament. Yet automatically he set his wits to work. Manfully he lied to her.

"She's jumped out of the window into the fire-net—she's all right now. Come along!" he explained and commanded. And jerking two worn blankets from the rumpled bed, he hurried her to the splintered door. As they passed the sink he picked up two towels, dipped them in a half-drained dish-pan and adjusted them over their mouths and noses. He went through the broken panels first, then pulled her after him.

When he lifted her to her feet he noted that her arms were not soft and strengthless, like a girl's, but hard and supple as a young workingman's. The discovery prompted a new and daring idea in his brain.

"Listen!" he instructed her briefly: "I know this building. We can't get down the stairways and the fire-escapes are impassable, but if you are as strong and brave as I think you are, and will do just as I tell you, there's a *chance* we can get out of this alive. But we haven't a second to spare! Will you risk it?—It's that or death for both of us!"

"I'll do just what you say; but, remember, I'm blind," she replied, but I'm very strong. Mother used to be a circus-woman long ago, and for years she has amused herself by training me on the horizontal bars and the trapeze. I'm all right if I can only get my hands or legs around anything. Go ahead!"

Even as she explained, he had led her to the open light-well on the north side of the hall. He now leaned over it and threw the blankets into the hall directly under them.

"Now, then," he ordered, "listen again! I'll go over this railing and hang from its base by my hands. Then you slide down my back with your arms about me, until your feet can touch the top of the railing directly under us, then swing yourself clear of the light-well, and drop into the fourth-floor hall. I'll swing, and jump right after you. Can you do it?"

"Easily," she replied promptly. "I can't see, but I know by touch exactly how these halls are built. I'm ready."

He let his body down carefully, braced himself for the coming strain, and called to her to climb down over him. She accomplished the whole agreed manœuver so quickly and deftly that it seemed to him he had hardly felt her weight before she spoke to him from the floor beneath. Kicking away from the wall to give his body momentum, he let go, and landed beside her.

He now saw, through the light-well, that the north hall wall on the third floor, just below, was beginning to burst into flame, blocking further egress at that point. Grabbing up the blankets, he clasped her hand and pulled her along to a second narrow light-well, on the other side of the hall

and closer to the front of the building.

"Now, once more—same thing again!" he gasped.

In half a minute they were over this railing and lying flat on the third floor, below the black, suffocating smoke. The entire rear of this floor was ablaze, and the back-flare from the flames drove them relentlessly forward, crawling on hands and knees to the front staircase.

Ben lifted his head cautiously. One look appalled him. The stair-treads reaching downward were all afire. Between them and the front of the building the cruel, frolicking flames had eaten their way across the hall, and the rooms on both sides were burning briskly.

At last they were looking Death in the face. A groan of horror parted his lips and his eyes turned back to the stairway in a stupor of agonized searching for an impossible outlet. Suddenly they lit up again hopefully. He had perceived that the balustrade, of hard wood and firmly constructed, was smouldering at its base, but that its upright square rods and top rail were only scorched, above the half-floor landing. He touched the recumbent, half-conscious girl alongside him, and in choking catches of his breath implored her:

"Quick, slide down the stair-rail on your stomach. I'll go first and catch you and pull you off at the landing! That's half on fire, but we can jump across it to the wash-room if we're quick enough!"

She roused herself and got on her knees. He placed her hands on the newel-post, threw his own leg over the rail, and slid.

The girl followed so close behind that he was able to grasp her around the waist and jump with her through the open doorway into the public toilet-room at the landing before the clothing of either, still protected by their blankets, caught fire.

He dashed with her through the bathroom to the window fronting on the three-foot space between the south wall of the burning tenement and the low, solidly built garage building a floor below.

Outside this window was a supplemental fire-escape platform leading east to the ladder itself.

Here, for a minute or so, they stood together and drew in great coughing breaths of the cold night air. But the fire was now beyond control. Flames licked out angrily from the windows opening on the fire-escape ladder, both above and beneath them. Again their escape seemed entirely cut off. Fifteen feet underneath them loomed the peculiar-shaped roof of the garage, with its narrow gutters and high-ridged, acute inclines. Ben calculated the distance and knew he could make it himself by jumping. But how could he let the girl down to it? Blind as she was, how could she make the leap?

Just where they now stood, over the narrow runway between the two buildings, they were completely hidden from all the people on the ground, so could expect no help from them, and minutes were growing precious. But he was determined not to save himself unless he saved the girl too.

Finally he turned to her in perplexity, and visualized their exact position to her briefly.

"It's our only and last chance," he ended; "we've got to jump or die! If you can't do it I won't leave you. But we're *safe* if we once reach that roof below!"

To his utter astonishment, she nodded her head undismayed, and replied:

"Fifteen feet down and four feet forward and out from this building; first a one-foot coping, then a two-foot wide gutter, and then a slanting up roof, you said. Is that right? Yes? All right. Throw down the blankets first to deaden the concussion when we land. Now, you go first. When you say, 'Ready! Jump!' I'll jump. Just brace yourself against the slant of the roof and hold out your arms to catch me or break my fall as much as you can. I'm not afraid."

But he felt her body tremble as he brushed against her. He helped her mount the finger-wide iron guard-rail of the fire-escape landing and placed her in exact position for her plunge, encouraged her with fervent comments on her pluck and agility; then poised his own body and leaped.

The momentum of his flight pitched him on his face, but the upslant of the garage roof acted as a convenient buffer, and he found himself unhurt. In another minute he was set in position and calling collectedly to the brave, unseeing, trusting girl to balance herself for the word.

There came an explosion of back-draft, heralding an ominous rumble from the loosening, crumbling beams and inside walls of the fast disintegrating tenement, now viciously alight from cellar to roof, and he dared not delay the command an instant longer.

"Ready!" he cried. "Now let go the ladder and jump!"

Her feet left the single, narrow metal rod where she so precariously perched, steadying herself by one hand on the ladder, and she sprang bravely outward and downward in her blind leap.

She struck almost on his breast; his arms clutched her, and they fell together and rolled, close-embraced, into the gutter, where the high coping stopped and held them. Half stunned by the impact, but fighting off the blinding, disastrous unconsciousness that threatened to engulf his senses at this crucial moment, he staggered to his feet again and dragged her inert form along the easterly gutter in the direction of Twenty-ninth Street, away from the deadly dangerous walls of the tenement. Midway of the garage's length he set her down and laid her back against the sloping roof—then he fainted.

Two seconds later the whole roof of the foredoomed tenement they had quitted, fell in with a crashing, splintering, deafening roar and thud, carrying the greater portion of all five floors into the basement with it, and sending up a blast of flame, sparks, smoke, burning gases and flying debris, volcanic in its fiery brilliancy. And piece by piece the tottering walls themselves dropped in upon the tangled, twisted, shapeless ruin.

Fifteen minutes subsequently, the same fire-marshal who had so flatly scouted Ben's suggestion of a still-living victim in the burning building, led his men up the roof of the garage again, with two lines of hose to drown out the wreckage. He had not taken

five steps along the narrow gutter, before his practised eyes discovered two huddled, unmoving human shapes a hundred feet beyond.

"Hello, there, boys!" he called back to the pipemen immediately behind him. "Drop that hose and give a hand here, quick! Somebody's jumped down here from the big building since we got off this roof—before the walls fell. Seems to be two of 'em.—Maybe they ain't dead yet. Hurry up!"

They hastened forward in single file along the narrow gutter. A superficial examination satisfied them that the woman was still breathing; thereupon the marshal took hold of the shoulders of the other victim, who was lying face-down in the gutter, and gingerly turned him over so he could see his face.

He gave it one swift, searching glance, then threw up his arms with an oath and sat down precipitately against the sloping roof.

"Mother of God!" he sputtered wildly in a choked voice, and crossed himself in superstitious awe of the miraculous. "Mother of God! it's Benny Potts, men! Can you believe it? Pray God, we're not too late to bring him to life again! Lay him up here against the slant and one of you hold him while we work over him. Gently now! He doesn't seem to be burnt anywhere, but maybe the smoke's got him."

The girl completely forgotten in their absorption, the three firemen exhausted all their resources of first aid over his apparently lifeless form. In a very few minutes, however, Benjamin opened his eyes and stared at them stupidly. The men fairly panted in their joyous relief at finding him still alive. The marshal put his arm tenderly about him and asked in a soothing voice where he most felt the pain of his injuries.

"Pain?" queried Ben absently; "where am I?" Then his senses partly cleared and he recognized his surroundings and the men beside him. He struggled to rise to his feet, crying out wildly:

"Where's the girl? Where's the blind girl? Is she safe? I'm not hurt at all—just fainted. Run and see what's become of the girl! She's *blind!* I tell you! I tell you I brought a *girl* out of that building with me! Can't you understand?" He was half querulous in emotional anxiety.

The marshal passed his arm through Ben's and tried to calm him.

"Easy now!" he soothed. "We've found her a'ready, Benny, my lad. Yonder, she lies; we'll soon bring her around I'm hoping." He pointed.

Ben gave an anguished cry, stumbled nearer to the girl, and fell on his knees at her side, leading the other men in their efforts at resuscitation in a frenzy of dynamic energy that soon brought her back to consciousness. The instant her sightless eyes unclosed he laid his fingers over hers to reassure her in the first fright of dawning consciousness.

"Are you hurt anywhere?" he asked her quietly, disguising his own fears in a forced casualness of speech.

She clung to his hand with both of hers and sat upright dizzily.

"No," she answered; "I'm all right; but where are we now? Is it much farther to the ground? Do we have to jump again?"

"We're on the roof of the garage and perfectly safe. The firemen will help us down their ladder in a minute. The old tenement is all gone! We got out just in time!"

She drew him to her and passed her other hand over his face—the only way she had of reading his features.

"And *you* saved me, blind as I am! I'll never forget you! Don't leave me yet. I'm all unstrung and don't know where to go. I have no friends."

"Don't you worry. I'll take you home to my own folks. We live only a few blocks from here and you'll be welcome with them till you decide what's best to be done next."

Suddenly the girl started violently, as though struck by a sharp returning memory.

"But—Mother—who was with us! Where is she? I must go to her. She may be hurt! I was so confused I actually forgot her till now! Take me to her!"

Ben looked quickly at the firemen, half in question, half in dumb admonition to spare the poor girl the fatal knowledge he felt they held of the miserable fate of the other woman. But the marshal, who had walked to the south end of the roof and was but now returning, failed to catch the warning look and blurted out before he realized the cruelty of it:

"If you mean the other woman, who jumped from the top floor, she's dead—broken all to pieces! They've taken her away to the undertaker's."

The girl recoiled limply against Ben's shoulder and clung there, shuddering with the shock of the bald announcement, stunned into gaping, moaning silence.

The marshal, nudged and admonished in whispers by his men, turned away, cursing himself for his blundering brutality.

What could any of them do or say now to remedy the mistake? The truth was out, and no human power could change it. The marshal started lamely to explain: "I'm sorry, very sorry," he said diffidently and contritely. "I did not know she was your mother."

"Oh! it's terrible—awful!" faltered the girl, her voice shaking with horror of the vision suggested. "But her troubles are over forever now," she added, more hopefully. "She was an incurable dipsomaniac. She wasn't *really* my *mother,* you know. She took me from a blind asylum when I was a little girl. And in her own way, she was good to me, and—I had no one else in all the world to turn to. I never have known who my real father and mother were; they say they're both dead. I don't know what's going to become of me now!"

As they reached the ground with the firemen, and their identities became known, the crowd in the streets set up a great shout and tried to break through the police-cordon, now somewhat slackened in vigilance, to meet and greet them.

Quickly the story of their wonderful escape and of Benjamin's unrivaled heroism was scented by them. Questions and exclamations rained upon rescued and rescuer; and in a flash, the tremendous news was snapped from point to point, until the whole mob began to cheer, vibrant to the exhilarations of this romantic, unbelievable dénouement to Benjamin's

supposedly fatal attempt at rescue.

With a whoop, Thompson, Ben's assignment partner, ran to the nearest 'phone and rushed the big story in to their paper. Ben had won his bet.

On a clear, cold, beautiful evening in December, a few days later, Benjamin Franklin Potts and Clarice Evergreen Cougle sat side-by-side on the long, stuffed-leather lounge in the fussily, cheaply, ornately furnished front parlor of the Pottses' flat on Thirty-first Street. They were alone, all the rest of the various-sized Potts having gone in a body to a movie show.

The gaslight in the little parlor was turned low, and in through the two front windows the pale moon-rays slid obliquely—heart-healing, vision-painting, full of all the poetry of the night. It was Ben's evening off and he was making the most of it in his own dreaming, poetic way.

Clarice felt for his hand and held it softly against her cheek. Benjamin gave a sharp, awakening twitch of shamed diffidence and drew his captive hand away, gently, pityingly. In this poor sightless girl, such actions were not to be construed as presumptuous, he knew. With her, her hands but took the place of others' eyes. What her fingers or her body touched or felt, to her was simply what she "saw."

Ben laid his own hand on hers and kept it there, reassuringly.

"You mustn't mind my absent-minded silences, Clarice," he apologized; "I'm given to day-dreaming, you know. And just now my fancy flew away with me,—it's the moonlight,—that always gets me going. I didn't mean to neglect you."

"*You* neglect *me?* Oh! I never thought that! I am only too glad to have you *near* me. And when I can touch you it's to me just like seeing you and helps so much, especially when you are not speaking. You are so *good* to give your leisure time to me so often, when you could be having so much better times with other young people who are not helpless and a drag on you, like me."

Ben's hand closed on hers with a quick firmness.

"Rot!" he expostulated. "If you think, my dear girl, that I hang around you out of pity, or some Sunday-school idea of duty and decency, you've got me dead wrong! I keep you company just because I *like* to—because I'm happier and more comfortable with you than with anybody else. You, yourself, are really very *interesting,* Clarice—I like—"

Impulsively she pressed the trembling fingers of her other hand against his lips, in modest disclaiming of his further praise, albeit her heart beat fast and tumultuously with strange, ecstatic emotions at the unexpected fervor of his avowal.

"Don't!" she breathed, softly, in humbled agitation. "You make me feel only my blind helplessness to do *more* to make you happy. Oh! you do not, cannot, realize how *much* your kindness and dear personal attentions mean to one who is blind, like me! To girls who can see, it would be only one pleasure out of many, but to *me* it is all of life! God! how I suffer when I think how soon I must leave you and go back out into the cold,

dark, fearful world again—alone! I'm afraid!—afraid!"

She grew almost hysterical. Ben seized her by the shoulders and shook her playfully.

"Stop that!" he commanded. "What kind of a low, unfeeling brute do you think I am? Forget it! You're not going to leave here, that I know of. Mother says you're more help to her about the house already than any of the other girls. You're earning your salt and nobody's kicking! Besides, you're real bully company for us. You can dance round dances as good as any of them; you're always bright and cheerful,—at least when *I'm* around. You can pick up a song, words, notes and all, by ear alone, before you've heard it three times; and when you *do sing* it, it's a changed thing. The words *mean* something. It's alive! Your liquid, birdlike notes thrill and startle one with all the intense sweetness and passion of the oriole's! Your very soul seems set to music! Perhaps if you could *see*, you would give it but a passing thought. Let you go? I guess not!"

She was sobbing now, great, shaking sobs of gratitude, relief and hope, —rescued for the time being from that terrible, heart-eating, blank despair that only the blind are cursed with.

He took her in his arms as he would a grieving child and let her cry her heart out there.

But, after all, she was a woman, and after the worst paroxysm of her weeping had passed, her mind turned swiftly to that ever-present obsession of the sex—her own looks.

"But, Ben, think how awful I must *look* to you,—so repulsive! And other girls so pretty and lovely to see!" There was real agony in the question,—the cry of a stricken, shrinking thing denied her natural woman's right to make herself beautiful to the sight of man.

Ben laughed outright and held her away from him, where the full light of the moon struck fair upon her.

"Why, you silly goose!" he exploded dramatically; "I should worry! You're going to make one of the most beautiful women in Chicago! No one could tell by looking at your eyes that you were blind at all! They're not disfigured like those of most people who lose their sight or are born blind; —they're just as clear and blue as marbles. You don't grimace or roll your eyes at all and you have the loveliest smile I ever saw on a human face; it's more like an angel's! Your motions, and your movements when you're sure of your way (and you generally are) are graceful as a young animal's. Repulsive! Oh! my eye! what a joke!"

She clutched him, tremulous with half-doubting delight; passed her hands deliberately and adoringly over his face, her soul's eyes drinking in his every feature through her abnormally, wonderfully sensitive fingertips, mad with the undreamed-of joy of his revelations. For he had given her woman's dearest, holiest wish—the accolade of beauty!

"O Ben!" she stammered in acute trepidation, "I can't—I can't believe it! It's—it's surely *impossible!* Tell me you're not making it all up! No? Then I'll *try* to believe it; for who should know better than you—you who are as beautiful as a god?"

"Who—me?" shouted Benjamin. "Me, with my fourteen 'carrot' hair, and big nose and bony bones? Why, all I've got is strength and a well-hardened reporter's cheek! Wow! Guess again!"

From that night Clarice was an altered being. To the unsuspecting eyes of the rest of the Pottses she seemed much the same, but the minute *Benjamin* entered the flat an almost imperceptible tenseness of concentration came over her manner; she seemed to be waiting for something, patiently but determinedly. Then, when she at last was alone with him, she would tremble and touch him conciliatingly, like a suppliant, faithful dog longing mutely and watchfully for the craved infrequent caresses of his master's hand. But, withal, she had become less impulsive toward him, more reserved and conventional. She dared not trust herself in his presence; her heart then beat so it hurt her. Soliloquizing in thought, she knew he liked her; he had told her so plainly, but it must be as a pitying friend, a protecting brother.

That he could ever *love* her and marry her as men love and marry those women who are not blind, was impossible, unnatural! She must not think of it—even dream of it! Men do not marry *blind* girls!

Of all this, Benjamin had not the slightest inkling, but, subconsciously, he found that whenever he was tired or lonely or troubled, he craved the sight of this strangely attractive blind girl, whose very affliction seemed to heighten her effect upon him. Her unique isolation drew him to her like a magnet.

She could not deny herself his affection, but she would not, must not, lead him on!

One thing she did do, however, which, begun innocently enough at first and simple in itself, bid fair to set him thinking: She contrived always to meet him at the door when he returned home from his nightly labors, now, since the fire, as a star reporter. No matter what the hour, even at two o'clock in the morning, he invariably found her there, listening and waiting with unquenchable, untiring eagerness for his coming. After the first two or three of these surprises, he remonstrated with her about it. Still, he liked it, and began to look forward pleasurably to these romantic, almost clandestine, meetings, and would have been deeply, if unanalytically, disappointed had they ceased.

They fitted frictionlessly and appositely into his inherent, romantic nature as a night-hawk.

On Michigan Boulevard, well north of Twenty-second Street, still stands today an ancient Protestant Church edifice whose interior architecture is second to that of almost no other church in Chicago, new or old, in its classic purity.

On this Sabbath day the great church was crowded, for its minister was not only a man of God, but a god of men, and its choir and organist were professionally renowned throughout the city.

The minister summed up his periods in forceful peroration, and followed with a fervid address in prayer; then closed mechanically the huge,

embossed, black Bible reposing on the crimson-velvet-draped pulpit-desk, and announced, "We will now sing hymn number two hundred and sixty-seven: 'Nearer, My God, to Thee!'"

The entire gathering arose, and, lead by the sure, trained notes of the quartette, began:—

"Nearer, My God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me."

Suddenly, as by a common impulse, a number of the people stopped singing, or dropped into a mere humming of the air; and curious, wonder-filled eyes were turned upon the east gallery.

There, in the first row of benches, a tall, noble-looking, golden-haired young woman, dressed in a pure white contrasting strikingly in its chasteness with the Titian splendor of her glinting tresses, was standing rapt, her eyes bent high on the sun-glorified memorial windows.

A young man, evidently her escort, held a hymn-book half in front of her, but her eyes never perused its pages. Instead, her whole soul seemed bound up in the clear, pulsing melody that poured in godlike power and passion from her unconsciously moving lips.

As she began the second verse of the immortal hymn, the power and passion of her notes increased till they overwhelmed all voices around her.

Oblivious of the charmed regard she drew, blind to and unnoting the hundreds of awe-filled faces now uplifted to her as the single, common focus of their enraptured attention, she sang on:

"Though like a wanderer,
Weary and lone,
Darkness comes over me,
My rest a stone;"

It was not the cold perfection of a cultivated voice, nor the effortless, natural operation of rare, God-given, splendid vocal chords alone, that held that whole assemblage spellbound; it was something vastly more ravishing and irresistible! Each word sank into their hearts like a revelation. Perfectly enunciated, clear as a bell, it was resonant, not only with godlike power and passion, but infused with a *meaning*—an intensity of dramatic understanding of its deeper purport—a sadness or pleading, a despair or clinging, a weariness or nostalgia, a loneliness or humility, that seemed to suffocate them, to tear their very hearts out! It was terrifying in its celestial supersensuality!

As she still sang on unerringly through the entire hymn, all other voices fell, stricken dumb before the awe-full glory of her heavenly message, the quartette and organist alone keeping time with her impassioned yet calmly unhurried delivery. When she finished the refrain of the fourth verse:—

"So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!"

many of her listeners were weeping convulsively, completely carried away by the terrible agony—the wild importunity—the blind, groping hope, yet sublime faith, of her heart-cry.

Then, abruptly, while she entered upon the last, drawn-out stanza of the hymn, her mood changed again, strik-

ingly. Her notes lightened in spirit and rose and soared with the golden roughness of the oriole's, till they pierced ineffably the solemn hush, the racing hearts of those about her, with a poignant, wingéd thrilling:

"Or, if on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon and stars forget,
Upward I fly;
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"

She stopped, lingeringly, her form bent forward to the warm illumination of the high south windows, her face uplifted and both arms raised and reaching out in still, prayerful adoration, as if she felt the sacred magic of a flood of holy light. And now a shadow passed over her lovely, exalted features, and she cried aloud, in a noteless threnody of supplication:

"God of the helpless, give me light! Blind! Blind! Blind!" and dropped, prostrated and sobbing, into her seat.

The whole weird, tremendous incident was excruciating in its harrowing pathos; the faces of all the immense concourse blanched in an almost superstitious, joyous terror of breathless expectancy. In imagination they listened to the far-flung song of a triumphant, unfettered soul already high above the stars in its homeward flight, winning on its first ecstatic vision of the very Gates of Heaven!

When, now sharply awakened from her trance-like spell, the marvelously moving girl cowered fearfully in her seat, her flaming face hid in her hands, utterly shamed with embarrassment in her tardy realization of the sensation she had so unwittingly created, the young man with her leaned over her averted face in chivalrous compassion.

"O Clarice! *do* not suffer so! I will be your eyes, dear—always! Don't cry so! you'll break my heart! Here's my handkerchief," he whispered brokenly.

His honest, open face grew set and white, his eyes alight, in a sudden, sweetly terrible *understanding* of the imprisoned soul of this girl, who now clung to him, sobbing alow:

"Take me away, Ben; take me home! *You* are all I have!"

At last he *knew!*

The kindly sagacious minister, surmising swiftly that no further words of his could or should distract his congregation from the beneficient effect of the ethical fascination wrought upon their spirits by the present unprecedented emotional occurrence, immediately they were seated pronounced his benediction and dismissed them.

Lingering a while behind the others to avoid the covertly appraising, astonished inspection of the rest, Benjamin and Clarice went out last of all.

At the front portal of the church the man of God met them. Wisely, humanely, understandingly, he did not press upon them either question or condolence. But one keen look at their transfigured faces as they approached him, electrified him into speech. He gently clasped a hand of each and pressed it warmly, saying simply but enigmatically:

"'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.' They, only, are *blind* who cannot *see* the *light* of *love!*"

Hair o' the Dog

BY KENNETH COTTINGHAM

IF such a man as André Beaunet, whose name was really known farther than it merited, tales are legion, I know. A number I might at this moment repeat, to which, as I have come to believe, he was no party, and which were conceived with an eye rather to diversion than to veracity. Blacker a great many, more commendable a few, than those that truly occurred, and on the whole, I suppose, more entertaining. Perhaps it was something in accordance with the sentiment of *a bon chat, bon rat,* that Beaunet was given so prominent a part by the *raconteur*. However that may be, he in the flesh must have been known to a very few of those who connected him so intimately and vitally with the incidents of their narrations, for I doubt not but that there were more men, each with a familiar tale of him, than André Beaunet had ever seen in all his years in the northwest.

Better than anywhere else was he known at Alban. There it was that Beaunet was replaced by "André of the Pack," suggested by the way he walked,—head forward, shoulders humped, stride stumpy, though precise in every step. But André Beaunet, unless it may have been in his younger and less celebrated days, had not carried so much as a duffle, even for himself; and the man that could beg, or buy, or break him into a tump strap had never been found. To him went the glory of the longest line of traps in that part, and the knowledge of the way for five hundred miles, any direction.

Morose, and without an attempt at friendship, he had been as long as men had known him, and for a great part, bitter and vicious. Perhaps it is through the tendency of imitation, perhaps through some more subtile natural agency, that a man becomes like unto that with which he associates; when he reverts toward the prime order of things, and suffers an atavism that makes him half-brute, half-human, and far harder to comprehend than either. Some such reversion, André Beaunet, he whose pack was the devil in his heart, must have undergone. Yet the fullest savagery of his nature was never known until the coming of Jerome Gates.

Gates, like Beaunet, came into the post at Alban out of the blizzard of a midwinter night, stamped the frost from his body, drew the pipe from his pocket and spoke not a word, even as had the other before him. The curious glances he bore with supremest unconcern; that hardest of all, the black stare of Beaunet, he underwent as indifferently as would a child. But if affected Beaunet strangely, and one could see the struggle in his countenance as plainly as that of a vicious animal in leash. The more prolonged the silence, the blacker his look be-

came, until, determinedly, he strode forward and for an impertinent interval studied the other through his lashes. After a moment, Gates turned toward him and each looked into the eyes of the other, Gates deeply, and Beaunet banefully. The latter stood on widely spread feet and rocking legs, with his great head bowed low; and very easily he spoke, yet very tensely:

"You an' me'll nevair get along!"

Gates's laugh was heedless without the words.

"Perhaps we needn't," said he.

"Aah, but eet's better, very moch better. W'at do you know o' the country?"

"More, I think, than any one under the Company."

Beaunet's eyes seemed to smile independent of the rest of him, and their pupils glinted with that impenetrable light, cat-like.

"Your name is—w'at?"

The other took the pipe down slowly and shook out the loose ash from the top of its bowl.

"Jerome Gates."

Beaunet stood as motionless as one stricken by a cataleptic seizure. The twitching at one side of his upper lip he quieted by drawing it tightly against his teeth.

"Zharome a-ah—I have nevair heard. But you,—you know o' André Beaunet?"

The gesture of hands was indifferent, and the snapping of fingers on either side, disdainful and near contemptuous.

"Oh,—so-so!"

Gates replaced his pipe and smoked placidly. Beaunet stared as one might in the dark, or through the mist. After a time he drew away slowly, stepped toward the door, then turned. Very quietly, and very deliberately, he spoke:

"Sa-am day, maybe a long way off, but sa-am day, f'r a very moch smaller thing than *thees*, Zharome, a-a Zharome—, oh, Zharome will—" he danced a clumsy step, went through the motion of a fiddler, tapped his breast and swung out into the wind.

Such was the meeting of the two,—Beaunet at the throat of the other like a dog whose domain had been invaded, and apparently with less reason. The reception accorded him that night was a mystery to Gates himself, though he never said as much, nor, for that matter, ever mentioned it. But one could see that from indifference there was a growing hate in his heart for Beaunet, that flourished and throve until it was no less in content and intensity than that of the Frenchman. Why he spoke as he did I know not; impertinent as the question might have been, other men, knowing Beaunet, would have behaved differently. In a wild thing, and Beaunet was little more, broken pride is but a degree below broken spirit and is resisted even more desperately, forgotten not as soon and forgiven never. Yet withal, it was, after a fashion, a case of flint and steel.

That was the beginning of the situation between the two of them. The retaliative threats passed by the one upon the other, in and about the post at Alban, served to keep matters imminent and the temper of men in a hair-trigger state. For André Beaunet no one had anything of love; and the

truly likable personality of Gates rankled in the feeling that passed between them. The latter was by nature more approachable than the Frenchman and more given to the company of men. But his attitude toward Beaunet, together with that which was told of the latter, came to embitter him almost completely.

So it continued through the summer and into the fall, when Gates set out a line to the southwest and Beaunet had gone into the north. But it was a bitter day of winter with the wind from the west and the sky a violet grey, that Gates left the traps at the south turn, struck around the neck of the lake, and, to escape what he knew was inevitable, sought shelter at the Point. And shortly after dark, one of those occasions when chance takes long odds against human probabilities, none stepped in but Beaunet himself. No doubt it was a surprise to all three, hideous to Cameron, at least unwelcome to Gates, and to Beaunet,—well, I know not. But they were long silent; Gates and Beaunet glared at each other and Cameron rapidly became less and less at ease. To the latter, Beaunet, who had stood in the same spot the whole time, finally turned. He jerked a thumb at Gates and spoke as openly as one would of an inanimate thing before him.

"Even the wors' night that blew, w'y should he stay here an' not go t' Alban,—th' greates' man in all Canada?"

Without a preliminary movement and with a savagery that would have done credit to the reputation of Beaunet himself, Gates leaped, murder blazing in his eyes. The Frenchman, without so much as squaring himself, stood with bowed head, motionless and unwinking. But old Cameron had bounded between.

In a moment, Gates was quiet again. Beaunet nodded at Cameron.

"See, m'sieu, he would keel me, me, poor André Beaunet!" He raised an outstretched arm toward Gates. "I hate him ma-ar than anything onder God's skies, yet I couldn't keel him in col' blood, as he would have me then." The jaws snapped tight and he spoke through his teeth. "But give me a cause,—ah, th' littles' cause, an' f'r chance I don' ask, an' I will,—ah—he knows, an' y' know!"

Cameron folded his arms across his gaunt chest, and the booming of the wind was lost in the force with which he spoke:

"It's the devil at the bottom o' it, that has y' both by the scruff o' th' neck! It's th' devil that y' please, wi' y'r snaps an' snarls, an' on the saddest day o' all, it's the devil y'll pay! No two better men that breathe; but as folks say, it's Satan grippin' y'r heart that bows y' down, André; an' it's Satan wi' you, Gates, that makes y' so still an' thinkin', an' starin'. As y' are the two best men o' y'r kind under the Company, so it's the two best friends y' should be. But that day y'll never see wi' this unceasing ruction atween ye, where one o' ye shows y'r teeth as soon as the other, as ye would each at y'rself before a mirror. If ye wasn't so earnest an' bitter about it, it'd be laughable; two men a-flyin' at each other wi' no reason in the whole world! But it's a like treatment y'r a-handin'

one another; it's a kind o' hair o' the dog treatment. An' it's on-Christian, an' low, an' caters t' the devil o' hell!"

Gates had resumed his chair and sat, staring and silent, before the hearth of the stove. André Beaunet, hunched and bent, swung on his great legs beside Cameron. He shrugged his thick shoulders slowly.

"If Zharome Gates was as many as th' tamarac, I'd hate 'em all, an' jus' as much! Maybe it is I don' know w'y. Maybe it is he's a coward, an' a li'l boy. He is afraid o' win' an' snow an' blackness; an' I—bah! He thinks he does, but he doesn't know th' woods lak me; he thinks he is, but he isn't,—a man w'at c'n guide lak me. I c'n go t' Alban t'-night, in th' storm o' snow an' win', an',—" he drew out his compass and tapped its metal case, "an' I don' need that. He is afraid o' th' night an' th' snow! I b'lieve, m'sieu, he is afraid even o' poor André!"

Gates had risen again and stood before the other.

"André Beaunet, we're goin' t' Alban together, you an' me." He motioned toward the one window. "It's singin' for us, André, maybe cryin' for us, out of a night black as the inside of a duffle. But it's that this thing has got where it has t' stop. It's that I break you or you break me, fair an' above board, afore it comes t' worse. You've named the stake, an' I'm for the game!" He opened the stove and tossed his compass among the glowing coals. "It's a long an' untrod an' pitiless trail, an' we'll make it not around but across the lake, where it'll be a little more interestin' t' keep straight. It's a good test o' us both, André! It'll try how much a man can talk by th' fire an' how much he can do with the breath o' the blizzard on him an' th' ice o' death a-creep in his veins. It's together we'll go, André; an' the one that first whimpers, th'—aye, th' devil pity; f'r it's as Cameron says, I know,—it's him as prompts us!"

Cameron begged and cursed and ended by washing his hands of the affair; and when they left, he but glanced at them, and said not a word.

The snow, with the wind behind it, struck into their faces like sand from a blast. Beaunet, with a long, creeping stride, swung ahead of the other until he reached the Point when, after glancing about like two hounds, noses in air, they went out on the ice together, separated by several rods. One could see the other only at times; yet Beaunet watched for the least divergence of Gates from the course, and the latter did the same for the Frenchman. So they went on, each sure of his own route, each straining to catch the least deviation on the part of the other. In a moment, the Point was lost behind them in the storm; the great stretch of ice lay bleak and barren around them, clean of snow but for a few hard patches half frozen to its surface. With the Point behind, nothing was left but to travel on a straight line, following the bearings with which they started, which, pursued unwaveringly, they both knew would bring them to their goal. The ice, rotten beneath and cracking with the change of temperature, they could feel tremble with their weight. The wind had begun to shift from west to west, northwest, and back again, making it necessary to note every individ-

ual variation in order to hold to the course. They walked with arms flexed at the elbows, and swinging horizontally that circulation in the hands might not be impaired, as it would be in the ordinary manner of walking; and Beaunet held his face twisted away from the wind that the exhalations might for the most part blow clear. In any event difficult, travel into the wind was disheartening. Yet steadily they forged ahead, ever with an eye to it and each other.

Once during a lull Beaunet called: "If y' really need a compass, Zharome, I *nevair* need mine!"

But the profanity of the reply was lost in the storm.

With the increasing cold, the ice had been cracking continually. And once Gates saw a black streak leap across its surface a step before him. But he knew that it was freezing again below and his attention he gave to the wind.

Beaunet called his name and he snarled back an interrogative. The other came nearer and exerted himself to the utmost to be understood.

"I tol' Cameron back there—that I couldn' keel you—in col' blood. I didn' mean that,—I don' mean it *now!* Tha's the way it'll happen w'en th' time comes!"

He moved away again without giving an opportunity for an answer. And almost in the next instant, Gates heard a muffled crash, followed by mutterings, inarticulate cries and wailing execration. He went toward the sound and saw a great black gap in the surface of the ice, in the center of which Beaunet flailed about. Floundering to the shattered edge,—it would but break again beneath his weight,—Gates stopped at a safe distance, and Beaunet, leaning lightly on the margin with one arm, stretched out his hand.

"Maybe y' c'n reach me fra-am there."

The ice broke, and he went down to his ears.

"Thought you knew enough o' the north to go around bad ice!"

Beaunet once more reached out. Gates stood motionless.

"Well, w'at th' dam' y' waitin' for?" And then, looking up, he saw the blue-steel gun swinging in the hand of the other.

"I'm waitin' for you t' tell me the water's cold!"

"Ho! Ho! No,—eet's beaut'ful pleasant in here." He leaned on the edge again and broke off a great, jagged shard. "Maybe it is that I'll be out in a minute!"

"Not in this life!"

"W'y?"

"Because when you're draggin' yourself up somethin's goin' t' happen, an' you'll keel back, an' no one'll ever see you again!"

Beaunet rocked himself in the water absently, as if in some deep contemplation. After a time he looked up at Gates.

"Well, w'at are y' waiting for?"

"For you t' whimper, an' tell me the water's cold!"

"W'y?"

Gates tapped the gun.

"Then I can finish you, per agreement!"

Beaunet shifted his weight carefully to the other arm and grimaced.

"Tha's for a li'l boy. André Beau-

net 'll show y' how a man freezes, slow, 'n' painful, 'n' ver' brave!"

Gates folded his arms and ran the gun through the angle at one elbow.

"This is the day Cameron was speakin' of."

"W'at day?"

"Your sad day, when you pay the devil!"

Beaunet rolled back his shaggy head.

"Ho! Ho! Tha's na-athing! He's my beeg brother!"

"Is it cold yet?"

"No,—vair' warm. But I mus' come out. W'at's—"

"I'll never let you!"

"That wasn't th' agreement!"

"No,—but I've got you now, an' I may as well make it finished. Agreements between me an' you would never really stand, anyway!"

Beaunet placed both elbows on the ice.

"Y' remember w'at Cameron said: 'Hair o' th' dog'? *Thees* is it!"

Gates shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, it's always been that. It might as well end so."

"A-ah!" cried André Beaunet with a grim smile. "I don' believe—" and he ended with a slow shake of the head.

"You're keepin' your big brother waitin'."

"I was thinkin'—it ain't at an end yet!"

"André, I'm seein' the evil in your eyes for the last time!"

Beaunet nodded slowly without looking up.

"Maybe! An' again,—maybe eet is I come as a—oh, w'at ees it,—wraith? Th' Wraith o' Pointe Rouge!" Gates shook his head gravely.

"No, your brother is too anxious to see you. He'll never let you out o' his sight."

"I'd like t' bet on that, Zharome."

Gates twirled the gun with his forefinger through the guard.

"Your chances are horrible poor! But you're a dyin' man!" He drew out his knife and held the sheath with it. "I want t' give this to you as a remembrance anyway. If you, Wraith o' Pointe Rouge, beat me t' Alban,—then use it! I'll come t' you so—" he took several steps forward, arms above head, then stopped. "An' you—" he made a vicious twisting lunge with the blade, leaned over and handed it and the scabbard to the Frenchman.

"Y' 've got me," muttered the other, "an' y' know it. Y' try t' break me, frightful like,—but not André Beaunet, even that way!" And taking the sheathed knife he ran it beneath the water into his belt.

Gates was flailing one thigh with his open palm, and the other with the flat of the gun.

"Ain't it cold, André?"

"Not a bit, Zharome. Y'—y' think eet is?"

"At just such a little word from you I c'd finish it all!"

Beaunet tossed his head.

"Hah! Y' 've got me a-a-nyway. Le's make it slow, an' sad, an' vair' brave for me. I c'n show y' how, Zharome. Maybe you couldn' do th' like av it,—but y'll nevair,—nevair,—forget!"

"The water must be wonderful warm t'-night, André."

"Aye, eet is, t' André Beaunet!" He clung to the edge with one hand, and stroke his ice-matted hair with the other.

"If only you had remembered, André, that there's always a current off th' Point, and that its ice is never none too good!"

Beaunet's tone held a taint of pain.

"Y-e-e. I was thinkin' o' y', Zharome, w'en I slipped through."

Gates raised the gun and levelled it full.

"That smirk o' yours, André,—ah, dam' that smirk!"

Beaunet shook his head. "Y' needn't. Maybe eet is I'll be leavin' now!"

Gates watched him sink slowly beneath the surface and then as slowly rise until but the top of his crown protruded, the black hair floating out in radiant strands. Then he came up suddenly, rising until his shoulders were out of the water, and regarding Gates, with the gun in his hands, with wild, staring eyes. The shoulders shrugged up to the neck, the head rolled back, and André Beaunet went down like a man of lead.

For a full ten minutes Gates, gun in hand, watched the black ripples. Then he turned slowly, walked this way and that, uncertainly, and was lost in the depths of the storm.

The next day,—very late in the day,—Jerome Gates reached Alban, and exhausted and half frozen, sought the Post. He heard the voices of men when he entered, not clearly, but in a vague hum, as sounds come to the ears of one drowning; and it was with a benumbed consciousness that he fell into a remote corner and feebly chafed his legs and arms. Slowly he came to himself, and finally, on unsafe limbs, rose. He started toward the great stove, suddenly stiffened in every muscle, and stopped. With arms held above the red plates and clothes not yet dry, stood André Beaunet. Gates held a nervous forefinger toward him, and turned to the man nearest, whom he failed to recognize.

"D' *you* see him?"

The answer, if there was one, was lost.

Gates leaned over and spoke in a whisper, as if imparting a solemn secret.

"He's dead! I—I—it was me that finished him!"

In the silence ensuing, his breathing was stertorous. Then came the sound of a voice that thrilled along his spine, and so gripped something within that his knees weakened beneath.

"Di'n' I tell y' I was his li'l brother? Di'n' I tell y' I'd beat y' t' Alban?"

Gates was alternately moistening his lips and drying them roughly with the back of his hand.

"Don' tremble! I'm not th' Wraith. I'm th' real André o' th' Pack! I'm here 'cause I know how th' mus'-rat breathes onder th' ice, an' 'cause y', Zharome,—li'l boy,—don't!" The tone became harsh and bitter. "Y' tried t' keel me,—sneakin' an' brutal, an' in col' blood!"

Gates had suddenly regained himself; he nodded his head slowly, and without looking up.

"Well, you got *me* now, André!" He raised his eyes and gazed at the

other. "*Now*,—it's *you* that has *me!*"

Without glancing at any of those about, Gates threw off his coat. Over head went his arms, and Beaunet drew the knife which had been given him, from the sheath at the back of his belt. Step by step, Gates went forward, slowly, as a man in the dark; but his head was high, and his eyes full on those of Beaunet; step by step, with his feet sliding along the rough boards. And when but a step remained, he stood motionless.

Beaunet held the knife as one might a saber; and so tightly he gripped its hilt that the knuckles were white and bloodless.

"Y' tried t' keel me,—sneakin' an' brutal an' in col' blood!"

Gates's lips were rigidly compressed. He stood composed and apparently fearless.

Someone started forward, but before he had taken two steps, Beaunet snarled, flourished the knife behind his head and struck viciously. The blade clattered along the floor and Gates reeled the width of the room, fell, and lay on his face by a great box.

No man ever heard the tone that André Beaunet used either before or since. He roared, with a strain of exultation, but with the tears rolling down his cheeks, and, above all, intense rage distorting his features.

"If he hadn't tried t' keel me so onfair, an' so brutal! I hate him now, 'cause o' that! I never really hated him b'fore. I c'n think o' him 'n' strangle th' wolv'rine w'at robs my traps, 'r crush th' bones o' th' lynx! I c'n have sa-amthing t' live for, an' live bettair. I c'n say, 'Zharome Gates—Zharome Gates—Zharome—Zharome,' an' fight through th' snow an' th' win' quicker than any man! May be t' hate him is th' grandes' thing I know, bettair than all th' worl'!"

He stepped over and peered down between the men kneeling on the floor. Turning to them he pitched his voice even higher, while great tears dodged down the lines of his face.

"I wouldn' have keeled him *for* th' worl'! I c'n hear his name, I c'n look at him,—an' do things w'at th' one who he says is my brother could *nevair* do!"

And he turned and lurched outside.

To his knees, to his feet, Jerome Gates rose painfully. He placed a hand tenderly on the spot where the flat of the steel had struck. And though it was aloud it was to himself, and out of his heart that he spoke:

"Dam' him,—I c'n almost pity him!"

Bitter-sweet

BY ADA MARY HARRIS

"UT you don't love me enough—you *can't* love me enough, if you ask me to give up all of these things I've had all my life, just to satisfy your own pride," protested the girl hotly.

The man's face paled beneath the tan. "Sweetheart," he said gently, "don't think it's selfish pride, or that I would have you suffer for just a whim of mine. It means my very life and honor to me. After we are married, I want you for my own. I can't give you a palace, or all the luxuries, but you won't have to work for we could have a couple of servants. We would have a little *home* and we would be so happy. It isn't money or show that count dear; it's love; and a man must have and hold his wife and his home for his own. He can't let another man—even his wife's own father—pay for his household and home expenses, and feel like a real man. Don't you love me enough to give up the vanities of life for me?" he begged.

The girl slowly shook her head. "It isn't that I don't love you enough to give up these things, but father has millions more than he can spend; why shouldn't he give me lots of money and beautiful things as he has always done? I don't think you have any right to ask me to give up this kind of life, and if you were unselfish in your love, you wouldn't ask it of me."

"I'd feel like half a man, and in time, you would lose some of your respect for me."

His face was white and drawn. "No," he said, gravely and simply, "I can never do it."

The girl caught her breath quickly and looked at him in mute despair. Silence fell between them.

The red autumn moon hung low in the sky, over the old gray wall at the end of the garden. The leafless, gray vine with its brave bunches of red berries, clung to the wall—bitter-sweet—most loyal of all the gay summer beauties to the homely old friend that had sheltered them. Seated on the quaint stone bench, the girl might have been the slender spirit of autumn itself, in her soft amber colored dress, with the bitter-sweet berries in her blue-black hair. Her blue eyes, into which the pitiful autumn note seemed to have crept, gazed unseeingly over the bare garden. The summer sunshine seemed to fade slowly from them, and the chill dark clouds of the coming winter pass into them.

The man, gifted artist though he was, had no eye for the beauty of the picture. All he saw was that dear face he had called his own, with the warm sunlight of her love for him, fading slowly from it, and the cold shadow of deliberate distrust falling over it.

The soft, slow music of a waltz sounded from the distant house, where youth and love danced gayly, and out

into the garden wandered the spirit of the melody, the high, piercingly sweet strain of a violin.

The man's face beneath its healthy tan, grew whiter, as he watched the beautiful face intently, but his own was fixed with a determination of love and proud manliness which nothing could alter.

A little bunch of bitter-sweet berries fell from the wall, breaking the tense silence.

Slowly the girl turned her face toward him. "Is that final?" she asked, with cold deliberateness.

"Yes—but, oh my dearest—" his voice broke pleadingly. She waited an instant. "Then, goodbye," she said in a low, dull voice, and walked slowly toward the house.

Like a statue of despair, he watched her. Only once, she faltered and paused as though to turn back, and he stretched out his arms with all the longing of his great love. But she walked slowly on, and with a dry sob, he sank upon the bench and buried his face in his hands.

Desire excused herself to the other guests at the gay country house-party, and went directly to her room. She gazed from her window at the lonely figure in the garden; then suddenly flung herself face downward on the bed.

He was so dear. He had been everything to her since that glorious day last spring when he had come into her life. And now, on account of his selfish pride, it must all end. Oh, it wasn't right,—it wasn't right. But after all, was he selfish? Hadn't it been his very pride and manliness that had attracted her? He stood for all that was strong and sincere. So many men had made love to her, and she had never been sure just which had loved her, and which had loved her father's millions. Richard loved her for herself alone. Of that, she could not help but be sure, and she had loved him—how she had loved him! After all, perhaps he was right; could she have the same high honor and love for him, if she married him, only to let her father keep her as he had always done? All night she pondered, torn between true love and pride. Love conquered, and for the first time in her petted life, the beautiful, but spoiled "little daughter of the rich," gave up her pride and love of the things that money can buy. As the dawn stole softly into her room, she fell asleep, tired out with her struggle, but happy as a child, to dream of the brave, sweet surrender to love which should be hers in the morning.

Coming down a trifle late to breakfast, she found her hostess announcing in disappointed tones the departure of Richard Vandiveer.

"Yes; he left for the five thirty train to the city. He left a message that he had been called into town hurriedly, and regrets that he will not be able to return."

All the sweet dreams of the night before faded suddenly. Too late! When would she see him again?

Richard's first thought had been to spare his presence, which might be embarrassing to Desire, his second to go where he would be alone with his hurt. He felt sure that his love was hopeless. A man might try a lifetime, and never amass a fortune equal to the one from which Desire Wendell

had always drawn. He didn't much care where he went. The world was a dreary place with all the sunshine gone from it; and he couldn't bear to meet his friends. There wasn't anyone to care where he went, or what he did, now, so he would just drop out of sight for a while.

Even his art, which, before he had met Desire, had been his all-absorbing passion, failed him.

He took passage on the first steamer and buried himself in the mountains of Switzerland.

One morning, on one of his long tramps, he came across an odd little building, too big for a cabin, too small for the summer home of a rich man, yet curiously perfect in every detail and quaintly picturesque among the snow-capped hills.

As he paused at the gate, a white-haired man came out of the house and went slowly down the walk.

"Blest if he doesn't look like a child of Uncle Sam," thought Richard, as the old man advanced, gazing at him intently.

"You are an American, I take it," said the stranger with simple directness. "I've seen you tramping about these hills. It's good to see someone from God's country again. Warwick, is my name sir, Robert Warwick. Won't you come in," he urged with courtly hospitality.

Wondering curiously at the man's manner, Richard went into the house, and thus began a friendship which was to last many months and mean more to both of them than they knew.

After several calls, the hermit (for such he seemed) asked Richard to come and stay with him for as long as he might be in the country. "Why not," thought Richard, "one place is as good as another. I will stay with him awhile."

One day, being alone in the lodge, Richard sat musing by the fireplace, and as ever, his brush began sketching the old, old dream, the slender girl with the blue-black hair. Coming upon him unaware, Warwick glanced over his shoulder at the picture, and his face suddenly paled.

"Who is that girl," he asked sharply.

Richard wheeled about, startled, then appalled at the change which had come over his usually reserved friend, helped him to a chair by the warm, glowing fire.

Then for the first time his reserve melted and he told his story of love and disappointment. The old man listened with curious intentness and a strangely deep sympathy.

"And her name," he asked eagerly, when Richard had finished.

Richard hesitated an instant. "Desire Wendell," he said.

"Ah, the irony of fate," murmured the old man by the fire. "Listen, son, while I tell you my story. You wondered why the portrait so startled me. I loved her mother. Do not be surprised; the world is very small—and very sad," he added with a sigh. "Years ago, when I was your age, I met Desire Hale. It was like magic, the quick, sure sense. I felt that here was the one woman in the world for me. My great, sure love made me confident and besides, I was young, full of bright hopes, and had a fortune in my own name. Before I had known her a month, I had laid my whole heart and fortune at her feet. She was

kind and very gentle, but she loved another—a poor student—and they were to be married as soon as he graduated in the spring. My life has been lonely, although I have more than realized the dreams of my youth as far as fame and position go. I hear that he has prospered well, and now has millions, while—look at me—my life almost spent, still lonely, and with nothing but this one comfortable little niche for my own." Yet he half smiled with a curious look in his eyes as he finished.

Several months passed, when one morning Richard, returning from one of his long mountain tramps, found Warwick sitting very still before the dying log fire. He did not answer to the cheery greeting, and bending over him with quick concern, Richard found his body stiff and cold. Robert Warwick was dead.

A week later, Richard recalled what his friend had once told him. "If anything happens to me," he had said, half shyly, "I want you to take the key which you will find in my purse and open the iron cupboard over the fireplace."

The key was easily found and, with a curious feeling of something about to happen, Richard opened the door. He found an old box containing several papers, yellow with age, which confirmed what he had always believed, that his mysterious friend had been a man of high rank, evidently a diplomat, much trusted and honored, both by his own country and those to which he had been sent. As he turned them over thoughtfully, a small photograph fell out. It was that of a very beautiful woman, so like Desire, he knew it could be no other than her mother. One paper, quite fresh, he opened and read with mingled emotions and growing astonishment.

"Richard, my son, for you have been both friend and son to me, you have never known how much your sincere and unselfish love has meant to me. I know your friendship was for myself alone and not for riches or favor. Coming when I was most lonely and hopeless, you have brightened and made rich by your friendship, the last years of my life; for I am sure I have not many more months to live. I have a surprise in store for you, and I beg you to accept it as you would from a father. You think I am poor; so I am in love and the deeper joys of life, but my worldly wealth has rolled up until my fortune, always considerable, has grown vast. I did not use it—why should I? It cannot purchase happiness, and this lonely life among the friendly hills comforts me more than to be among people, always seeking me for what I can give them. So, when I am gone, Richard, it is all yours. I have written instructions to my lawyers, whose address you will find on this sheet. I hope that with it, you may purchase the happiness it failed to bring me—happiness both for you and for Desire Hale's little girl.

Please take it, knowing that the giving of it to you, has given me the deepest and most real joy I have ever known.

Goodbye my son, and God bless you.

Robert Warwick."

Deeply moved by the expression of love in the letter, Richard stood with head reverently bowed before the memory of his friend.

Then the full import of the message came over him. Here was the fortune with which he could make Desire happy! He would start tomorrow. After all, perhaps, life held its fullest measure for him.

It seemed strange to mingle with people again. At the first city he stopped, and with the feeling that it was good to be in the busy, hustling world once more, he bought an English newspaper. The headlines leaped out before his eyes:

AMERICAN LINER BURNED AT SEA

The big U. S. A. passenger ship, Marianna, famous for her luxurious appointments, was destroyed by fire today in mid-ocean. Wireless unable to signal. The crew and all the passengers are lost.

And in the list of passengers were the names,—

John Wendell 48 New York millionaire
Desire Wendell, his daughter, 22 New York.

With broken heart, and the dull misery of a beaten man, without love or hope, Richard Vandiveer fled back to the solitude of his mountains. He would let their vast silence and restful loneliness soothe his hurt, and in his art, he would find expression for those joys which he craved.

So he thought; but his brush, once so obedient to his every wish, seemed to divine his heart and would paint but one image—his Desire in all her moods. His one solace seemed to be in those dear pictures of her and with loving, reverent art, he recalled memories of her, until they seemed almost real.

Desire waited long, but no word came of Richard, or news of his whereabouts. People wondered, but carelessly put it down to the "eccentricity of genius," that comfortable phrase which covers so many strange happenings. They thought his artist soul had craved solitude, and that he had just run off to some romantically beautiful place and would return with wonderful paintings to delight them.

But Desire knew better, and she worried and grew paler, and as the months wore by, lost all her gay animation and joy in life. Her father noticed the change and worried.

"Little girl," he said one day, "if you can't tell your old dad what's bothering you, he can at least try to help. This summer, I'll take a long vacation and we'll trot off together and see some of the beauties of the old world."

"Daddy, you're too good to me," she cried, but her eyes were full of tears.

The following month, they sailed for Europe.

It was sunset in the mountains, the glorious sunset which only the beautiful mountains of Switzerland ever witness. Richard Vandiveer, returning from a day's hunting, felt the sublimity of the hour. Dreaming, as ever, of Desire, he seemed to see her beautiful face among the distant clouds.

Coming around a bend on the path, he came face to face with a beautiful girl with blue-black hair and wistful eyes—Desire! No, it couldn't be true; it was only a vision of his loving dream. He stood as though petrified, afraid to move or speak, lest his dream should vanish.

A dignified, white-haired man brought him to earth again.

"Pardon, sir," he said in French, "could you direct us to the village? My daughter and I have lost our way, tramping through the mountains, and the lateness of the hour has increased our anxiety."

Richard's bewildered brain at last cleared, and then worked like lightning.

It was true—here was Desire! How she came there, he did not know, but now he must find out if she still cared. They would not recognize him with his rough beard and rugged face, in this out-of-the-way corner. His hair

whitened over the temples by grief, disguised him still more.

He replied in English, "Yes, he could direct them to the village but it was a long way. Why not remain at his lodge until morning. It was spacious, and he would be glad to have guests from his native land. Also, he would show them what a famous supper he could cook for them, all furnished from his mountain garden."

So it was decided, and they returned to the lodge. Mr. Wendell, happy to find a man of his own land, talked freely; told him of the shipwreck which had so nearly ended their lives and gave a thrilling account of their miraculous escape.

Desire was silent. Who was this man with the strong, dark face and with eyes so like those of her dear, boyish lover? Arrived at the lodge, Richard bade them make themselves "at home" while he cooked them a supper "fit for a king." He directed Desire to a room where she might brush up, and as she paused before the closed door, her thoughts were full of vague fancies and the lost happiness of love.

As she closed the door behind her, she glanced casually about the room, then—oh! what marvel was this? On every side were pictures of herself, Desire Wendell, in every mood and expression—the Desire of two years ago. Wondering, half frightened, she went swiftly from picture to picture, and paused at last before one. Seated on a quaint stone bench, with the soft moon rising behind the old gray wall, the girl in the picture was the reincarnation of youth and life. But instead of the cold, hesitant glance of doubt, the eyes held only the warmth and tenderness which perfect love alone can give; and on the bare old wall hung brave little bitter-sweet berries. It was a picture of the things that should have been. Only one person in the world could have painted that picture. Where was he? Could she find him? She would ask their big genial host with the lined face of a strong man and eyes of a boy.

After supper, as her host was showing her his picturesque little garden, she inquired suddenly, "Do you know a man named Richard Vandiveer—an artist?"

"Why, yes, there was a chap by that name here, some time ago but," he added simply, "he's gone now."

"Not—not dead," she whispered, her face white and a cold fear at her heart.

That one look told Richard all he wanted to know, and a great joy surged through him.

"No, he is not dead," he said gently. "Wait here a little, and I'll see if I can find him." With that, he was gone, leaving Desire full of sweet hope and heart-trembling fear.

Swiftly Richard worked; shaved off the disguising beard, brushed his hair the familiar way, and with a tender little smile, knotted her favorite old blue tie under his collar. Then he stole silently out into the garden. Coming up behind her quietly, he paused. His voice broke on the old fond little play upon her name.

"Desire," he whispered softly "my Heart's Desire."

The Missionary Snake

BY WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

EDGAR RALEIGH was an imaginative boy, his grandmother said, and probably that was why he had named his garter snake Clarissa Jackson. Clarissa Jackson was the name of the girl in a book he had taken from the shelves in the sitting-room one afternoon when Uncle Nathaniel Raleigh had gone to a G. A. R. meeting and Grandma Raleigh to a missionary tea at the same time. Miss Jackson was described as moving "with sinuous seductiveness, the train of her bizarre evening gown curling behind her." Edgar had looked up the words and the description seemed to fit his pet, particularly after he had nursed her back to health. Whether Clarissa was a lady or a gentleman snake Edgar had not the faintest idea, but she had seemed feminine in all her coquettish movements from the very day, a week before, when he had found her lying on the roadside at the edge of the village, where she had been left for dead by some unimaginative person.

Edgar sat on the south porch and admired the green and black stripes that ran from Clarissa's flat head to the tip of her tail. She had wrapped her twelve inch length—she was still very young—in a neat coil on his knee and now basked contentedly in the afternoon sun. It was one of those rather rare occasions when it was safe to take Clarissa out of her box in the barn and bring her to the house. Whistled strains of "The Wearin' of the Green" told that Katie was busy in the kitchen. It was the hour when Uncle Nathaniel took his nap and when he came downstairs it would be to go for his daily constitutional. The constitutional was made certain today by Miss Sarah Armstrong, anxious spinster, who was calling in the south parlor and pouring a steady stream of missionary, temperance, and other talk, into Grandma Raleigh's patient ears. Pete Abare, periodical "help," did not count, although he kept his dinner pail and bag of tobacco on the south porch and left his task of mowing the lawn, at brief intervals, to refill his pipe. He always seemed busy with his own thoughts—so much so that he sometimes muttered to himself and when spoken to rolled an eye that did not look as though it saw. It was only necessary to spread a hand over Clarissa when he appeared.

Through the open windows of the south parlor came the steady hum of Miss Armstrong's conversation, broken now and then by reply or comment in grandma's voice. The south porch was back of the parlor, screened by an angle of the house, and Edgar was not only safe from observation, but the cackle of Miss Armstrong's parting would warn him when grandma might be expected to move about the house. Now and then words and even whole sentences of the conver-

sation became audible as the women unconsciously raised their voices.

"....such a *good* boy," Miss Armstrong was saying, "and with such a soulful expression in his face. I couldn't help but observe it last Sunday as he sat by your side in church, Mis' Raleigh, as I was sayin' to Mis' Peabody only yesterday. I hope she realized the difference between him and that brat of hers!"

"I have tried to bring him up as a Raleigh," came in grandma's gentle tones and Edgar realized, with a sick feeling, that they were talking about him. If there was anything he hated it was to be accused of a soulful expression. It made him think of pictures of angels and of Sissy Brown, who wore a flat white collar and a big bow under his chin although he was twelve years old. It was at such times as this that Edgar wished he could be a pirate with a moustache and gold rings in his ears. He hated his blue eyes and his fair skin that refused to tan or freckle, with a deadly and never waning hatred. Grandma was pretty good, he had to admit, but she did not understand why a boy of ten should want shirts and suspenders instead of neat waists that buttoned to his trousers, and she would never in the world have accepted Clarissa as a member of the family.

Clarissa raised her head and hissed. Edgar drew a small pasteboard box from his trousers' pocket and opened it. Three somewhat damaged angle worms and a dozen dead flies were the contents. He set the box carefully on the knee opposite to Clarissa but she scorned the offering and her owner felt with growing misgiving that perhaps he did not understand the dietary of snakes. So far as he knew, she had not eaten in the week of their companionship. Cookies, grasshoppers, boiled potatoes and peanuts, were alike left untouched in her box. As soon as he could get a chance, he intended to go over to see Stub Blungy and ask him what was good for snakes. Stub had once brought up a young owl, until it died, and he almost always had rabbits, or mice, or some kind of animal.

Again Edgar became conscious of the continuous talking in the parlor. Miss Armstrong's voice was up once more and now grandma's voice had lost its hint of weariness and she was purring under a string of compliments launched at his devoted head.

"Where *is* the dear child? I do so want to tell him how *sweet* he looked when he spoke that piece to the Fourth of July doin's in the church! What was it, now? Oh, yes! 'Bing 'Em On the Rind!' I remember just as well as can be, although, to tell the truth, it don't seem like much of a title for a war piece, not to my mind! Sounds more comic to me!"

Edgar snorted with such forceful contempt that Clarissa almost fell from his knee. That was the way with women! They never got anything right! Miss Armstrong was thinking of how *"sweet"* he had looked and not at all of the stirring swing and heart-moving sentiment of "Bingen On the Rhine." His thoughts rambled through the pleasant regions of revenge and he was on board a low, black, rakish craft in the Spanish Main, ordering Miss Armstrong to

walk the plank, when his grandmother's voice sent ship and fellow pirates whirling off in a typhoon of panic.

"If you insist, Miss Armstrong, I'll have Edgar come in to see you. I think I heard him out on the south porch a short time ago."

Grandmother Raleigh stepped with remarkable briskness for a woman of her years. She was already in the dining-room. In another moment she would be at the porch door. Edgar tore open a button of his waist, thrust Clarissa into his bosom, and pulled his four-in-hand tie over the opening. He was standing up with his hands plunged in his pockets and his gaze on the shambling form of Pete Abare when his grandmother appeared at the door.

"Edgar, come into the parlor; Miss Armstrong wants to see you," she said, and added, with a note of sympathy in her voice, "she will keep you but a minute."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Edgar. He scuffled his feet in the hope that his grandmother would start back and give him a few seconds of grace. Instead, she held the screen door open.

"Come along, Edgar, like a good boy!"

"Yes, ma'am." He plunged through the door and a moment later entered the parlor ahead of Grandmother Raleigh, squirming inwardly at the touch of her hand on his shoulder. He almost prayed that she would not put her arm around him as she sometimes did.

"Well! Well! Well! He comes right in when his grandma calls him, like a nice boy! And what an affectionate face he has got!" The visitor wagged her head with its curious structure of hair that sometimes was slightly grey and sometimes was not, and Edgar felt as he did at the circus when he had mixed too many popcorn balls with too much taffy.

Miss Armstrong held her hands out as though he were a pet dog. Edgar felt a movement in his bosom that thrilled him with dread and he tried to draw back, but an admonitory pat from his grandmother sent him forward. He was between her and the caller and there was no escape. He felt another wriggle inside his waist and grew dizzy as Miss Armstrong began to stroke his shoulders.

"Won't the little man give me a nice kiss right on the mouth—ow! Ow-o-o-o-o-o-o!"

Miss Armstrong flung herself back in her chair and grasped her lean cheeks in her leaner hands, while her eyes looked as though they might pop into her lap. Clarissa, perhaps jealous of other feminine attentions, had come out to see about it. She peeked around Edgar's necktie and her flat head waved angrily at the end of three inches of brilliantly striped neck.

Edgar made a lightning movement with his hand and Clarissa disappeared as his grandmother hurried to the side of her guest.

"Mercy me!" she cried. "What *is* the matter?"

The thump of Uncle Nathaniel's cane sounded on the stairs. Miss Armstrong's eyelids fluttered down and her body became limp. She dropped her hands and composed them gracefully in her lap.

"She's fainted! Edgar! Nathan-

iel! Get a glass of water, quick, while I bring the camphor bottle!"

Uncle Nathaniel stopped in the doorway from the hall into the parlor, took in the situation and wheeled with a grunt. As he marched toward the kitchen to get the water, Mrs. Raleigh hurried upstairs for the camphor.

Edgar was unacquainted with fainting spells, but he saw his opportunity and had taken a soft step backward toward the door into the dining-room when one of Miss Armstrong's eyelids lifted halfway.

"Stop right there, you miserable little brat!" she hissed. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this!"

Edgar stopped, motionless from astonishment. He had felt a little bit sorry for even Miss Armstrong, when he saw her with her eyes closed, but now a devilish inspiration seized him. His chance to escape, the safety of Clarissa, the reward here and hereafter of bad boys—all became as nothing before an overpowering desire to get even for that *"sweet"* and "Bing 'Em On the Rind."

He thrust his head forward like Old Chief Thunder Mountain on the trail of the hated paleface as he tiptoed toward the reclining form of his enemy. Her eyes popped wide open and she drew back. He suddenly swept his necktie aside and stirred up Clarissa with one and the same movement. Clarissa reached half her length toward Miss Armstrong and ran out her forked tongue with an angry hiss not a foot from that lady's prominent nose.

Miss Armstrong leaped backward—straight backward, regardless of her chair, which slammed into a corner. She spun around once in the middle of the room while Edgar, scared at his success, jammed Clarissa out of sight. Uncle Nathaniel appeared in the doorway, a glass of water held precisely in his hand.

"Yarp!" cried Miss Armstrong, and flung herself into his arms. The glass of water struck his white waistcoat at the top and poured down, mostly inside it seemed, from the rivulets that came out of his trousers' legs. The lady's arms were about his neck. He looked at Edgar over her shoulder with a strangled expression.

Grandma Raleigh came up behind Uncle Nathaniel and suddenly the latter's burden went limp in his arms. He held her up while grandma held the camphor under her nose. Edgar began to back toward the dining-room door.

"Stay right where you are, young man!" thundered his uncle. "There's something behind this and if I ever saw a guilty looking boy, you're one!"

Edgar obeyed. A long shudder went through Uncle Nathaniel's burden. He worked his grizzled moustache fiercely and stared straight ahead as he held her stiffly from him.

"She's coming out, thank goodness!" exclaimed grandma. She was and did, with a heave that sent her arms again around her supporter's neck. He helped her to a chair and grandma applied the camphor again. Suddenly she straightened up and pointed a steady finger at Edgar.

"That boy!" she cried, and covered her face with her hands. Uncle Nathaniel, water still oozing down over his shoes, stepped to her side and

bent forward, his back to Edgar.

"What did that young rascal do?" he demanded.

"He-ao-o-o-oh!" groaned Miss Armstrong. Grandma leaned over to hear. It was Edgar's chance. With a noiseless bound he was through the dining-room door and in another instant he had reached the south porch. Almost under his hand lay Pete Abare's dinner pail. A glance told him Abare was not in sight. He lifted the cover, stuffed the squirming Clarissa into the pail and was back in the parlor, standing exactly where he had stood a moment before, as Uncle Nathaniel and Grandma Raleigh turned from Miss Armstrong's chair.

"Edgar!"

"Yes, sir."

"Come here, sir!"

"Mother, search that boy!"

Grandmother Raleigh drew back and her lips became a firm line.

"Nathaniel," she said, "if that boy is full of snakes, as Miss Armstrong *says* he is, I wouldn't touch him for the best farm in this county!"

"Then I will!"

Uncle Nathaniel grasped Edgar awkwardly, but firmly, by the arm. He passed a searching hand over the outer surface of the waist that had lately been the abiding place of Clarissa, discovered two empty buttonholes and probed inside. Then, taking Edgar's head in the crook of his arm, he went through the three pockets of his trousers. The box of angleworms and flies intended for Clarissa, a marble, a knife, two coils of strong cord and a handkerchief, were his reward. He straightened up and looked severely at Miss Armstrong.

"It wouldn't do any harm for you to see Doctor Bingham about your nerves!" he said.

Miss Armstrong rose up in wrath. "Nate Raleigh, it's a pretty note if you can't take my word before the word of that pesky youngun!"

"He searched the boy himself, and you saw him do it," put in grandma, quietly. "I don't think we'd better say anything more about it!"

"All right, then! *I'll* say good-by!"

Miss Armstrong bowed first to Grandma Raleigh and then to Uncle Nathaniel and flounced out of the room. The front door slammed behind her. Edgar's elders looked at each other expressively.

"It's a good thing you never married that girl!" exclaimed grandma.

"Girl!" snorted Uncle Nathaniel. "Old maid!"

He turned on his heel. Edgar, breathing easily for the first time since he had been called from communion with Clarissa on the south porch, began to gather up the treasures rifled from his pockets.

Abruptly there came the sound of heavy but hasting footsteps in the front hall. Edgar looked up. Katie, big, bony and red-faced, was standing in the doorway with the same look she had worn the day Stub Blungy stole her hot mince pies. Uncle Nathaniel retreated before her.

"Missus Raleigh, ma'am," sputtered Katie, tumbling her words out, "I'd like me wages, if you please, ma'am. Ye've been good to me, ma'am, but I'll not be stayin' in a place where Frinchmen has deliryum tremens in the dooryard!"

"Katie!" Uncle Nathaniel roared

and Katie jumped, but she stood her ground.

"Yes, sir, an' I've told Missus Raleigh more than once no good would come of havin' that Abare on the place out of pity, wid his dinner pail where he runs for a drink every ten minutes! An' now look at 'im!"

"Katie, what do you mean?" Grandma Raleigh cried. Edgar made a tentative movement toward flight, but a glance from Uncle Nathaniel glued his feet to the carpet.

"I mean what I says, ma'am!" stoutly. "The Frinchman is a-havin' deliryum tremens by the south porch! He's a-seein' shnakes!"

"Katie, I think you've been seeing things yourself!" Uncle Nathaniel looked at her suspiciously.

"That I did, sir! I saw the shnake meself when he was havin' 'em, an' ye kin do the same!"

"What are you telling us, Katie Donohue?" from grandma.

"It's the livin' truth, so help me! The shnake was a-wagglin' at him out of his dinner pail an' he was prayin' to it!—the heathen!"

Edgar felt the eyes of his uncle turned in his direction and he looked at the floor. What might have happened he never knew, for at that moment there was a shuffling in the dining room and Pete Abare, bleary-eyed and swaying, his dinner pail in his hand, stood in the door. There was a shriek from Katie's end of the room.

"There he is wid his pail full of shnakes—the nerve of him! Comin' in here like that! Drive him out, Mister Raleigh!"

"Abare, what's the meaning of this?" demanded Uncle Nathaniel.

"'Scuse me, Mis' Raleigh an' Mister Raleigh," rather thickly, with an attempt at a bow. "You talk to me 'bout pledge five or nine time, Mis' Raleigh, an' not drink no more. Dat pledge, I take heem now!"

"Abare," said Uncle Nathaniel, sharply, "have you been having delirium tremens in the yard?"

"No, sare," very humbly; "I have heem in my dinner pail. You make dat pledge strong, Mis' Raleigh?"

"Let me see your pail!" Uncle Nathaniel looked it over, inside and out.

"Dey ain't real snake, Mister Raleigh," said the victim. "My brudder, he have same t'ing only elephants an' camels. He shoot at one an' bus' up de winder!"

"Huh!" grunted Uncle Nathaniel, handing back the pail. "Wait on the porch, Abare. Katie, are you satisfied now?"

"I will be when the Frinchman puts his name to the pledge!"

"I take heem," promised Abare firmly, as he turned to go. Katie clumped down the hall and the family was alone. Edgar shifted from one foot to the other.

"Young man," growled Uncle Nathaniel, "what do you know about this debacle?"

Edgar turned his clear blue eyes on his grandmother. He knew she was waiting anxiously to hear what he would say for he had been brought up to speak the truth and shame the devil. He looked his uncle squarely in the face.

"Nothing, sir," he said, meekly. Which was the truth. He didn't know what debacle meant.

The Wooing of Sadie

BY JOSEPH MACKIE

I GUESS probably I never told you about the time we got the new boarding house here, did I? That was some years ago and this place wasn't no metropolis then. There was only a dozen or so houses around here altogether, and the fellows from the A. B. ranch used to do most of their feeding at a wagon that was operated by Sim Ya, one of the oiliest chinks you ever saw. There was about twenty of us eating there when I come and I can't say that any of us got fat.

I think Sim run the wagon like he would a opium joint: figure on giving us something right at the start that would kill our sense of taste and then slip it to us reckless like, till we quit. So we was all pretty well pleased when Bob Stewart announced one day that there was a bran new inhabitant in our midst and that it was a woman who was going to start a boarding house.

Of course when a fellow gets along in years like me, the fact there's a woman in the vicinity don't get him excited as it does some of these young bucks, but I crowded around with the rest of them to hear all the details so I could tell anybody else if they asked me; I travel quite a bit through these parts and there's always somebody asking me for the news.

Well, it seems that Miss Sadie Bartlett—that was her name—was a cousin or something to the blacksmith, and that she was good looking, a little stout, and had to work for her living; also, that she had rented a house and was going to dish up something pretty fancy for us laboring men in the way of eatables. That sounded good to us all right, and the first day she opened up she had a table full of the hungriest looking guys you ever saw, all dressed up in their Sunday clothes, too; that was the funny part of it. It seems that every dad blamed one of the boys had said nothing at all to no one but just gone ahead and washed his hands and face and put on his necktie and combed his hair, and so forth, as though he was going to a wedding or something. I don't know why they done it, either, 'cause there wasn't none of them no lady killers, but I guess there's something about a woman that sort of makes a man dress up and try to show off a little.

I remember we had quite a spread too, though I couldn't enjoy it as much as I'd liked to on account of my collar being too high, or me not being used to wearing laundry; anyhow, we all done our best not to spill nothing on the tablecloth and I guess we come out all right.

It made me laugh to see the way the fellows hung around after dinner, trying to make a hit with Sadie. I don't like to see a man make a fool of himself that way. It was positively sickening. One of them went after a pail

of water, somebody offered to sweep the floor, and somebody else wanted to help put the dishes away. They acted as if they hadn't never saw a woman before. Two of them pretty near had a fight over the chairs; Tommy Walters said they ought to be slid under the table and big Charley Mattson thought they ought to be set back against the wall. I laughed so I nearly dropped the plate I was wiping.

We got quite well acquainted that day and of course we all ate there regular after that. Nobody missed a meal for fear someone else would get ahead of him some way. And then at night, when we got through work, there was always a bunch of fellows hanging around the house. You'd see one sitting on the fence, another come riding along on his horse, and a couple on the porch, all the time. There was always two or three inside 'cause Sadie liked company, and she'd get us to singing. You could hear the boys practising some fool song most any time of day, when they ought to be working. It got on my nerves. I know one day me and Joe Blake had some hard words because the darn fool come howling away at some sentimental thing about eyes of blue, just while I was trying to get the hang of that one that goes, "You maa-aâd me loo-oove you," and so on. He never had no voice anyway.

Then the fellows started bringing presents to Sadie and the way some of them chaps spent their money was scandalous. Bob Stewart shows up one night with a fancy clock he'd sent away for. I'll bet it didn't cost him more than four-fifty at that, but the way Sadie thanked him you'd of thought it was worth a hundred dollars. Then, a few days later, old Pete Mathews give her a arm chair that he picked up somewhere and fixed over himself, and then Steve Burby blew in a month's salary on a sofa. I suppose he had an idea he might get to sit on it with Sadie. Did you ever see men go crazy like that over a female?

Me being a little older and more experienced in the ways of the world, I tried once or twice to give some of them a little advice about throwing away their money foolish, and making themselves ridiculous, and, anyway, there wasn't none of the things they give her looked half as nice as the manticure set I got her from Chicago; she told me so one night when I had dropped in to see if she could lend me a dictionary, being as how I was engaged in preparing a little surprise for her in the way of a poem. It was a mighty good one too; it went like this:

Oh lady fair with eyes so blue
Your lips are red as roses
Your cheeks are fresh as the morning dew
And gosh! how cute your nose is.

Your—and right there is where I needed the dictionary. I didn't know how to spell complection. And that just goes to show how things happen. Now if I had of been a scholar I wouldn't of had to go down there to use the dictionary, although the chances are I would of rid past once or twice before I went to bed, just for a little exercise.

Anyway, she told me how nice the manticure set was, and so on, and we got real friendly, and then she told me something else. It seems she wanted a sewing machine to make some

clothes on, and the nearest place she could get one was Boise, and that was about eighty miles away and she didn't see how she was going to manage. Well, of course I jumps up and I says, "Sadie, where you going to stand it?" and she says, "Why, what do you mean?" and I says, "Why, I mean if you really want a sewing machine, I'll see that you get one. You just leave it to me." Well, we talked a while longer and I was thinking it was time to go, when I heard a noise outside. The door was open and I got out on the porch in time to see three or four fellows beating it up the street. I couldn't see who they were, but I decided they was some of the bunch that had come down to visit Sadie and when they saw me there, they changed their minds. On my way home I figured I'd go to Boise the next day, get the sewing machine, tie it on the horse, behind me, some way and get back here the following night.

First thing next morning, I went down and saw Archie, the foreman, and told him I had to go to Boise to see a doctor on account of my eyes being so bad. He looked at me kind of queer and he says, "I guess I might as well call it a holiday for the rest of the week from the looks of things." I thought he meant that me being the best man he had, he wouldn't be able to do much while I was away, and I didn't find out till later what it was he really meant.

Well, I started out about six o'clock, and in an hour or so I was almost to the big hill about nine miles from here. I swung the pony into a lope and settled down for a hard ride. There was some fellow away ahead of me that was certainly pounding along in good shape, and off to the north there was another chap going like he was scared of something. About noon I come up on them quite a bit, and who do you suppose it was but Billy Jackson and Tom Walters. They stopped to eat and I joined them. I couldn't imagine where they was headed for and they wouldn't tell me. They was even suspicious of each other, and we kept looking grouchy like, all the time we was eating.

I told them about my eyes, and they haw-hawed till I thought they'd bust. I didn't know what the joke was and I didn't care much, because I was thinking all the time how surprised they would be when I got back with my sewing machine, and how Sadie would be so tickled she might even want to marry me. We started off together, me expecting all the time for them to turn and go back or say something, because by this time we was quite a ways from home, and they ought to of been getting back to work.

After awhile they told me they was off for a few days to celebrate Billy's birthday, and that they was going to Boise to do the trick. Well, I thought it funny they hadn't said nothing about it before, but I didn't care, because they wouldn't be hanging around Sadie, anyway.

We stopped about five o'clock to water the horses, and we was sitting down having a smoke when I heard somebody shout, and here's three fellows coming up out of a gully about a quarter of a mile north of us, and say, it was Charley Mattson, Steve Burby and Joe Blake. They looked some surprised when they recognized us

and after they had fixed their horses, they come over and sat down with us. They must of rid like the very dickens, or else started a whole lot earlier than we did, and I couldn't think what they was going to Boise for. We was only about ten miles from the city then. Well, they told me: Steve was going to have a tooth pulled, and Joe's horse had stepped on his foot, Joe's foot, I mean, the night before; Charley Mattson said there wasn't nothing the matter with him, but seeing as how all the rest of the outfit was going to Boise, why, he just naturally got sort of lonesome and come along too.

It was quite a bunch of invalids that rode into town an hour or so later, and as some of the fellows was feeling a little weak from the long ride, we headed for Johnnie Heffron's and lined up to the mahogany. I left as soon as I could because I had to go and buy my sewing machine and put it some place where I could get it early the next morning, as I figured on getting a early start. I had to stay sober too, for I knew it wouldn't be no easy job to balance that thing on the back of a skittish horse all next day.

Well, I bought the machine, a dandy, too; one of them kind that fold up, you know. The upstairs part drops down into the basement and then the roof comes over and shuts down. It set me back fifty-eight dollars, but it was some sewing machine, all right.

I didn't see nothing of the rest of the boys that night, and I got me a room and went to bed early. The cookee called me about daylight, and I hustled through breakfast and got my horse out and loaded the sewing machine on him. It was a great big job too, and I finally had to get some ropes and tie them around my shoulders, but after monkeying with it for about half an hour, I got it fixed and started off.

When I got to the outskirts of the city, why, I begun to see things. First Billy Jackson come tearing along, and what do you suppose he had with him? A sewing machine. A couple of blocks east, I makes out Steve Burby hitting it up as though he was in a hurry, and tied on to the back of his horse was a—ye-ap—a sewing machine. Then the three others hove into sight and every mother's son of them had a sewing machine fastened to him some way. Then I commenced to get all lit up. The hounds must of been sitting out on the porch while I was in talking to Sadie, and they had heard everything we said, and then each one of them must of got together with himself and decided to beat me to it. Well, that made me pretty sore and I got busy with the quirt. I made up my mind I'd give them a run for their money, anyway, and they would have to go some if they got there ahead of me.

Say, did you ever ride eighty miles across the landscape with a sewing machine tied around your neck? No? Well, you try it some time when you're feeling *ong wee*, and then come over and see me again, and we'll compare notes. It was some ride. Whenever I'd get close enough to Blake, I'd holler and ask him how his foot was getting along, and he'd yell back and ask me where was my glasses. Then Charley Mattson's cargo shifted, and

he had to stop and tie it up, and we all rid past real friendly and give him the laugh. He caught up to us after a while, though; he had a big bay mare, and if he'd been at all handy about tying himself up to the sewing machine, he'd of beat us hands down, but he had to stop every few miles and fix himself. We had a mighty good lot of nags and we hung together. It was as pretty a race as you'd want to see. We stopped at Bailey's creek to breath the horses and get a bite to eat, but there wasn't no conversation that you could notice. Tommy Walters got up to get a drink and the rest of us thought he was trying to give us the slip so we all jumped up and lit out.

Well, we got back here about eight o'clock. I was some thirty rods ahead of the bunch. Somebody yelled at me as I passed the first house, but I was too busy to stop and chat with them, and I made a bee line for the boarding house. There was nobody in sight and I tumbled off and unfastened the machine and lugged it up to the front porch and set it down. I just had time to knock at the door when the rest of the fellows rid up and started unpacking. The door opens and who do you suppose I see but our friend Sim Ya, standing there with his hands in his sleeves and grinning at us. I told him I wanted to see Miss Bartlett and he grinned some more. "Him glon," he says. "Gone! Where?" says I. "Him glon away with bloss Archie, get mallee, I lun bloding house now."

I sat down on the stoop kind of heavy like, and the rest of the crowd come up to hear what was going on. Sim told his story over again for their benefit. Nobody said nothing for a few minutes and then Joe looked over at me and sort of grinned, and we shook hands all around.

I wasn't feeling very good and after getting something to eat, I took my sewing machine down to the tool house and hid it away. I didn't have no hard feelings against Archie; he was a mighty good fellow. Only I thought he might of told us something about it. However, I'm not the one to let anything like that eat me up, so a couple of days after, when the new foreman come, I got Archie's address, and packed up the machine and sent it to them as a wedding present, the first chance I had.

I went down to Boise for Christmas some months later, and pretty near the first person I bumped into was Archie. When he saw me he come over and shook hands with me, and I asked him how he was getting along, and he says "Fine, and I want to thank you boys for remembering us; we certainly appreciate them."

"Whaddymean,—them?" I asks.

"Why, don't you know?" he says, sort of surprised,—"the sewing machines,—we got six of them from the A. B. ranch about a week after we were married."

Amar Singh

BY FLORENCE BLAIR

"I COULD imagine anything happening among these mountains; it's the commonplace and material which have no place here. Tell me the wildest story of fairies and spirits who wander among these hills, and I will believe them. Why, Ralph, I can almost see them!" cried Barbara Blount.

Captain Walsh looked at his fiancée intently. "I believe you could," he said slowly. "We all have eyes, but they don't always see. Sometimes, I believe we poor mortals have our hour of vision, and things we have only felt before, do become visible to our eyes."

"If I don't have my hour among these hills, I shall never have it," said Barbara softly. "Today, the veil seems very thin to me—I can almost see—"

The plain of Cashmere lay before them, bathed in softest sunshine. It seemed as if it were at their very feet that the winding river flowed through fields of waving crops, past clustering villages, on through the Vale that travellers had come thousands of miles to see. The clouds had cleared and, far away in the distance, snow-capped mountains cut into the blueness of the sky with sharp, jagged outlines; softest tints of blue and amethyst and pink lay on the nearer hills, dark purple shadows chased each other over the pine woods that clothed the slopes, among which the little summer settlement of Gulmurg lay. The very wind itself seemed to whisper the secrets it had learned, as it passed over the wild tracts that lay beyond the distant inaccessible mountains, which stood looking down upon the peaceful valley. It was a sight to stir the most torpid of imaginations, to tear the scales from the blindest eyes, to wake every sleeper to things even undreamed of before.

"We must start down now or we shall be benighted in the woods," cried Captain Walsh, springing to his feet. "Come, Barbara, we have a long tramp before us and not too much time to do it in. If I let you, you would dream here forever!"

"I can't see—I can't see—yet," murmured Barbara sadly, as she took one last look over the silent plain to the great mountain ranges beyond. In a few minutes, they were well on their way, following a little mountain stream as it bubbled and dashed over stones and boulders on its course to the valley. The crest of the hill was bare and clean of trees, which grew thickly only on the lower slopes, and looked like a vague purple blot far below. The ground was stony and very rough-going, with sudden steep dips and depressions strewn with rocks, between which coarse grass and wild mountain plants struggled for life.

"Take care you don't fall," called

out Captain Walsh warningly, as he watched his fiancée step nimbly on ahead from stone to stone. The sentence was hardly out of his mouth, when it ended in muffled swearing, and Barbara turned to see him hopping on one leg while he nursed the other in both hands. When she reached his side, he was very white.

"Here, sit on this rock. Phew! Your ankle *is* swollen. I'll have your sock off in a minute."

Captain Walsh said nothing more. He had exhausted his vocabulary and had nothing further to say upon the subject, as to him repetition was always distasteful. He hopped as near the stream as he could and let Barbara bathe his ankle and improvise a bandage with her scarf. Then he forced on his sock, seized his stick, and said with determination: "Let's push on."

He did push on for a few minutes, with uneven hops, then collapsed.

"Look here, Barbara," he said quietly, "I see there's only one thing to be done. You must go down to Gulmurg by yourself and send up a dandy with coolies to carry me down before nightfall; after dusk, I should freeze here and be stiff by the morning. I would not ask you to do it unless I knew that you would be all right. The country people are quite harmless. Take Sam with you and follow this track till you get to the *murg*. If you go briskly, you'll be down in two hours."

Barbara saw that this was the only thing to be done, so, wrapping Captain Walsh in her overcoat and whistling to the dog, she started off down the hillside, as briskly as she could.

"Bear a little to the left when you get to the *murg*," he shouted.

"All right. I'll be as quick as I can," she cried, waving to him gaily. Her two months' climbing and golfing in Gulmurg had hardened her muscles and made her fit and strong. Her short country-made "puttoo" skirt hung clear of her boots and, as she walked along, she swung her stick with the light-heartedness of youth and health.

After twenty minutes' brisk walking, she left the stony ground and came out upon the grassy stretch or *murg*, that bordered the woods. How lucky that Ralph had warned her to keep to the left; she would never have remembered! She crossed it briskly and, passing into the shade of the pines which clothed the side of the hill, started to go down through the maze of dark trunks which rose up straight and stately like a very forest of masts. After a while, she put up her hand to push away some hair which had fallen over her eyes and found that it was damp. Was this smoke among the trees? If so, it must mean that some Cashmeri huts were near. No, it was not smoke, but the clinging mountain mist that climbers dread, which closes around them with such a soft, caressing touch and, so often, becomes their winding sheet. The faintest chill of fear crept into Barbara's mind, but, as yet, it lingered only in the background.

She made another trend to the left and pushed on steadily with quick steps and eyes which peered anxiously ahead to see if there was any break in the trees. Suddenly, a curious sinking sensation in her left foot made

her stop. The heel of her boot had come off and the nails dug into her foot at every step. She had to adopt a sort of ambling trot in order to keep upon her toes. Sam kept well to heel; all the spirit had gone out of him. And, every moment, the mist thickened.

All at once, a dreadful thought flashed into her mind with the swiftness of an unexpected blow. Suppose she had missed her way and was wandering down one of the many wooded *nullahs* which surrounded Gulmurg and Ralph had to spend the long hours with those terrible chills creeping up around him? She knew only too well the bitter cold of a September night in Cashmere and that exposure on the crest of the hill for hours meant almost certain death. She, at least, could keep warm and on the move all night, but what chance had he? The air was already beginning to sharpen and sting as the evening crept on. Barbara remembered that the first time she had ever seen him, at a club dance in Dindi, tall and soldierly in his mess kit, she had thought that he would not give up his life without a struggle, and it returned to her mind now with the sinister swiftness of an ill-omen. Was that struggle to be made to-night?

She wrenched the most painful nails out of her boot and pressed on steadily, with a sort of dogged courage which forced the dreadful thought as far from her as possible. The dark trunks of the trees were still wrapped in a haze of white, which just touched their outlines with a softening finger and made them look dim and elusive. She had been walking for three hours, just the time it had taken them to climb up. She was certain now, she had gone wrong and missed the way but, to retrieve the mistake, in a place where all was dim and every sound muffled, seemed impossible. A cold blank feeling of utter despair rushed in upon her.

Suddenly a figure loomed up out of the mist ahead. It looked almost like a stunted tree only, at the top, there was something large and strange.

As Barbara looked steadily, she saw it was a man standing quite motionless in the track at the place where two paths met, as though he were waiting for a traveller. Something in his still, expectant attitude made Barbara draw back suddenly into the undergrowth and watch him with frightened eyes, while the sharp beats of her heart seemed to her like the blows of a hammer on an anvil. For the first time in her life she felt the full presence of fear—not the vague stirring of alarm which moves in us when we sense the fluttering of its garments as it hurries by—but as if it had come very close and held her firmly in its grip.

As she peered through the mist, her eyes gradually grew more accustomed to the uncertain light and she saw it was a native who stood facing her, with a large turban wound round his head. She watched him and felt sure he was listening intently, with a sort of tense expectancy, waiting for someone in the very heart of the forest. And suddenly, she knew, with the subtle but absolute conviction that comes to us sometimes, that it was for her, and that he was now watching her intently.

A mad longing to break away from those quiet eyes seized her, to rush away into the misty depths of the undergrowth and lose herself utterly in the dim vistas of the pine trees.

The horror of passing that still figure seemed—like the awful tasks we have to compel ourselves to perform in nightmares—impossible to face. Then the thought of Ralph crept into her mind, till the fear for herself gently loosened its hold and she went slowly forward down the path over the soft pine needles.

As she drew nearer, she saw that it was no Cashmeri herdsman, but a Sikh Sepoy, who stood at the turn of the path. His fierce black beard was brushed back, his long almond-shaped eyes glowed dark beneath his turban, his tall massive form stood immovable in a strange stillness. A curious white scar which marked his left cheek touched a chord of memory in her mind and, with a sob of relief, she recognized her fiancé's orderly, Amar Singh, a man whose business it was to stand between his master and death on active service, whose life he had to guard even at the cost of his own. He had evidently become anxious at their non-appearance and had come out into the forest to meet them. Barbara knew she could never make herself understood nor explain Ralph's position, so she followed him without a word as he turned round sharply up a track to the right and stumbled along behind him, her fear quieted, and hope fluttering back to life.

Then Sam began to give trouble. Like many another Sahib-taught dog, he had always hated natives, and now he hung back and whined and when Barbara attempted to drag him along, he cringed on the ground in sheer terror. In a frenzy of impatience, she picked him up and carried him as there was no time to lose. In a few minutes, he ceased struggling and lay still and inert, giving only an occasional whine.

Amar Singh walked on ahead, as straight as one of the pine trees.

They splashed through a little stream, then down a wooded slope on which the trees grew more thinly. The mist was clearing now and Barbara wondered, as she hurried along after him, why the old Sepoy thought a woman worth the saving, but, perhaps, he realized that his Sahib's life hung on her reaching Gulmurg before sundown.

They came to a clearing where a primitive-looking collection of Cashmeri huts clustered, and from which a wailing sound of singing came. The singing ceased and all grew strangely silent as they passed by.

A pariah dog came slinking after them, his evil eyes gleaming with a furtive, wolf-like, look, his thin body slipping through the trees like a shadow. Then he turned suddenly and fled, scratching and tearing himself in his headlong flight.

Amar Singh walked on straight ahead as before.

Barbara's foot caught in a root and, lurching forward, she tried to catch at the Sepoy to save herself from falling, but she was farther away than she had imagined and she slipped to the ground on to the soft pine needles with a gentle thud. They turned a corner of the path and came upon an old woman gathering sticks.

As they passed, she shrank away and pressed her thin, shrunken body as far back into the undergrowth as she could. Barbara looked back and saw her scuttle away, scattering her sticks in all directions as she ran, while a queer, cracked scream echoed among the trees.

At last, when Barbara's anxiety for Ralph had almost reached breaking point, they came to the edge of the clearing and found themselves on level ground, with the cup-like basin, in which Gulmurg lay, before them. At the sight of her father's hut, she broke into a run, and dashing past Amar Singh ran up the path and into the hall. In ten minutes' time a dandy, borne by four coolies, had started up the hill, led and directed by Colonel Blount himself, and to Barbara's intense relief they returned a few hours later with Ralph, who appeared to be fairly comfortable.

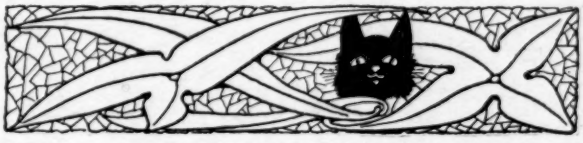
After dinner, Barbara came and sat by her fiancé's side. The fatigue and anxiety of the afternoon had left behind a vague sense of restlessness in her mind, over which a shrinking feeling of apprehension seemed to hover, and which resisted all her efforts to dispel.

"Ralph, why did you never tell me that you had brought up old Amar Singh here with you?" she asked at last.

Captain Walsh looked at her curiously and intently. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and, as she waited for his answer, each tap seemed to Barbara to mark a perfect æon of time.

"Because he died of fever two months ago in Pindi," he answered slowly.

"Ah, I have seen—I have had my hour of vision at last," murmured Barbara with trembling lips.



The Knock at the Door

BY PEARL EVANS

"IT ain't nothin' to be ashamed of. I used to be just as bad as you once."

The speaker, a big, heavy, motherly-looking woman, folded her knitting and gathered up the ball of worsted she had been using. Then she laughed comfortably. Opposite her, almost swallowed up in the depths of flowered cretonne of a great, sleepy-hollow chair, sat a wistful-eyed girl of twenty or twenty-two summers, little Mrs. Worth by name, and the motherly-looking woman's neighbor, in the apartment below. Just now, the younger woman's lips were parted as though she had been listening breathlessly to the older woman's words. At their conclusion the girl laughed too, a silvery, pealing laugh that made you fairly tingle with joy. And then:

"To think of you being afraid," she said wonderingly. "But—" she paused and the older woman finished for her.

"But—but I was young then, like you, you're right. Not fair, fat an' forty."

The girl looked conscious, then laughed.

"Oh, but I do feel silly. How my husband will laugh at me. Really, though, if it hadn't been for that horrid rat I should have gotten along fairly well. You see, I've never been used to being alone at night. As soon as my husband left me to-night I settled down to be as brave and comfortable as possible. He really didn't want to leave me, but I told him the men would all think he was henpecked if he didn't go out with them once in a while. I darned some socks and read the paper. I was right in the midst of that new murder case, you know, the one where the robber came in through a fire-escape and murdered that young woman, when I heard this horrible, scraping, digging sound. My heart stood still."

"You poor kid," her companion commiserated. "I know, I know. That rat comes down here an' I declare, sometimes, if I didn't know just what it was I'd declare it was spooks. We'll have to set a trap for him."

"If only I had known about the rat," the girl went on, "I shouldn't have minded so much. As it was, it took all the little courage I have to go out to the dining-room. I tried and tried to find the switch. Just when I got my hand on it the kitchen shade went up with a terrific bang. I didn't mean to scream. It just came without my knowing it." Then, as the older woman smiled, "It was horrible though. I expected to be shot or strangled any moment. Even now I cannot get it out of my head that I saw a man at the kitchen window. It's imagination, of course. It must have just gotten loose somehow. Shades do, sometimes, I know." She sighed. "I guess I'll never be brave."

Mrs. Purdy, the heavy woman, shook her head emphatically. "That's nonsense! By the time you've raised a family like I have, you'll get over it. Just the same, I'm glad you screamed an' I heard you. Otherways, you'd been worryin' all night. Good gracious, any time you get scared that way, just come right up here. For that matter, I'm as good as alone myself. My husband is so tired at night, he goes to bed right after supper an' I just sit here an' sew or read the funny sheet."

A dull, rumbling sound came from the adjoining room.

"That's Mr. Purdy now," his wife informed the girl. "He sure does snore some, don't he?"

The girl smiled.

"My dad always whistles, a funny, breathy whistle like this," and she puckered her lips and breathed out softly.

"You're just a bride, ain't you?" Mrs. Purdy inquired.

Young Mrs. Worth laughed softly.

"Yes, we've been married five months," she said.

"I suppose you've got lots of pretty silver an' things,—weddin' presents," Mrs. Purdy suggested, rocking back and forth. "I didn't get much except plate when I was married. Oh, of course, now, it's different," she added, as she noticed her guest's furtive glance at the gorgeous silver punch bowl and other articles on the sideboard. They're solid from away back. I suppose you got lots of cut glass, too. Most people give cut glass nowa-days. It's showier for the price."

Young Mrs. Worth's eyes brightened.

"Oh, yes, I have a lot of glass. But most of my things are silver. I have several hundred dollars' worth. You and Mr. Purdy must come down some night and see all my pretty things. We'll have a little feast, too. You see, I haven't many friends in New York. Ralph and I come from Chicago, but he had a splendid offer here so of course we had to accept. And I suppose that's really the trouble with me. I'm used to being at home with the folks and these apartment houses, with strange people coming and going all the time, just terrify me. I never open the door for anyone. Why, I don't even let my husband use his key. I make him knock three times, this way—and she gave three sharp little raps on the table—before I open for him."

"Well, I declare, you are funny," Mrs. Purdy gurgled. "But, say, speakin' of feasts, I've got a couple of bottles of beer on the ice. Have some?"

As she spoke, the clock struck twelve.

Mrs. Worth jumped to her feet.

"Oh, dear, no, thank you. I must go now. Ralph will be home by half-past twelve and I must get a bite for him to eat. I'm sure it was sweet of you to come and bring me up here."

"Oh, goodness, that's nothin' at all. But I'm sorry you can't wait to have a bite. I'll go right along down with you, so's you won't be afraid."

Once down stairs, the women went through the entire apartment.

"I guess you'll be all right now," Mrs. Purdy assured the little bride, after making sure no one was hidden in the closets or under the bed.

Mrs. Worth thanked her and then laughed at her own foolish fears.

"Yes, I'll be busy now, getting ready for Ralph. I won't have time to be afraid."

Left alone, she hustled about, laying the pretty Japanese doilies that she and Ralph used when they were alone, whipping some cream for his coffee and fussing daintily about the china. In the kitchen, the kettle steamed merrily on the gas range, and the girl sang a bright song.

In the midst of all her preparations came Ralph's three clear knocks at the door. With a cry of happiness she hurried toward it. As she did so, she glanced at the clock. Just a little run, a turn of the knob. The door opened. The eager arms were thrown out for the accustomed embrace, but instead, something hard and cold touched her forehead and a low voice full of menace said, "Shut up, damn you."

Why did she not faint at the first contact of this deadly cold thing which she knew to be a pistol? Why did she smother the scream when the masked face was thrust against her own? All she did was to back down the hall, into the cosy dining-room, back still farther into the little kitchen, her legs trembling beneath her at every step. All this at the bidding of that horrible, masked creature.

When they reached the kitchen, the voice spoke again, menacing, cruel: "Gimme those earrings."

Too frightened to really understand, the girl stared vacantly at the man. But the voice continued relentlessly: "D'ye hear me? Gimme them earrings."

Slowly, mechanically, she raised her hand and unfastened an earring, one of the gorgeous opals, surrounded by tiny diamonds, her wedding gift from her husband. Her trembling fingers caught in her hair so did the now unfastened jewels. Again the voice hissed in her ear, "Gimme those things,—pretty damn quick, too, or I'll blow your brains out!"

At last, the earrings were free. The masked man reached for them. As he did so, he touched her hand. At the touch, some strange, hot rush of resentment and bravery flashed through the girl. She flung the jewels at her feet, while she trembled all over.

"There they are. Get them!" she hurled out, and did not recognize her own voice.

At the same moment, her bare arm came in contact with something—something which burnt and caused her to wince. A thought came to her. Here, here, was safety. So, with a movement born of despair, she reached toward the merrily steaming kettle at her side. With both hands, she raised it. A hissing, sizzling jet of water came from its mouth, down upon the man before her, groping for the jewels. As it touched him, a cry of pain, anger, terror, burst from him. The earrings dropped from his fingers. With a bound, he tore through the dining-room, down the hall, and, like some wild thing, the girl was after him. With her last bit of strength, she closed the door. Then all faded from her—the rooms, the fear, the terrifying voice that demanded unheard-of things.

How long she lay she knew not.

Hours after, it seemed to her, though it was in reality but half-an-hour, she heard three knocks at the door. With dawning realization, she fell to trembling. She knew better now. No more could they fool her. She would not open the door. She even heard a voice say, "Jean." She only smiled at this trickery and went off again into semi-consciousness.

But at last there came a touch, Ralph's touch. And then she heard him speak close to her ear. He had come. His key, of course,—he could get in that way. And then, at last, his arms were about her. Gently at first, finally in a torrent, the tears came and she relaxed.

Brokenly, incoherently, she told him all. He held her close and murmured, "My God, Jean, suppose you had been hurt?"

Suddenly they were interrupted by the sound of a bell, their own front door bell.

"Oh, Ralph, don't open it," his wife implored him. "It might be that awful robber back again."

But he laughed at her fears. "Nonsense, girlie, things like that don't happen twice in one night."

And then, in response to the push button, steps—heavy, manly steps—came through the lower hall, up the stairs and stopped at their door.

Ralph moved toward the door, but Jean clutched at him.

"D-don't Ralph, please. I'm so frightened."

But he put her to one side gently. "It's all right, girlie," he reassured her, at the same time opening the door.

A tall man, holding in his hand a black satchel, stood before him.

"Mrs. Purdy's apartment, I believe," he said. "I'm Doctor Merlin."

"The—the doctor?" Ralph stammered.

"Yes, yes," the man said hastily, "I understand this to be very serious. —a hurry call."

Jean pushed her husband to one side. Her fears were swallowed up in her concern for her kind neighbor.

"No, this is not the Purdys' apartment. They are directly above," she said softly. "Has anything happened? Mrs Purdy is not ill, is she?"

The doctor shook his head rather gruffly. It was plain to be seen he resented being dragged out of a nice, warm bed.

"No, it's not Mrs. Purdy I'm here for. Some accident to her husband. She was making a cup of coffee or something and she slipped and spilled the kettle of water down his back. He's pretty badly burned. I'll run along now. Right upstairs, you say?"

Jean nodded, then shut the door. After this Ralph and she leaned back against the wall and stared at each other open-mouthed.

Ralph was the first to speak. "Well, I'll be damned," he muttered softly.

Jean gulped back a sob, then clasped her hand about her husband's arm.

"Oh, Ralph, it's terrible, isn't it? But—but we won't do anything about it, will we? I—I'm sure she didn't know anything about it, aren't you? Why, she acted just like a mother to me."

A Cup of Water, Satan, Please

BY TERRELL LOVE HOLLIDAY

CARRYING a special delivery letter just handed him by the postman, a small, wiry young man with twinkling eyes, brick tinted hair and a mouth that seldom lost its humorous pucker, climbed the stairs of a Sherman Street rooming house.

At the top of the steps a bulky form blocked his passage.

"Twenty-nine is vacant, Mr. Dimon," glowered Mrs. Murphy, hands planted upon fat hips and grey eyes steely hard. "Ye'll leave me yer key and yer baggage till this last four weeks' rent is paid."

"Yes, ma'am," acquiesced Jimmy Dimon, detaching the key from his ring. "As for the baggage, I was pig enough to eat that. My appetite has been fierce since the auto starter patent soaked up the last of my funds."

"A joke, is it? Ye think money is nothing at all to a poor widow?" Jimmy's mouth straightened to lines of grave earnestness.

"Mrs. Murphy, you've had to wait on me before, but you've never lost by it. And you won't now."

"If ye'd only leave patents alone," scolded Mrs. Murphy.

"If patents would only leave *me* alone," mourned Jimmy, "I could easily save the money to pay my rent—and buy a marriage license. As it is, all of you knock me. A certain lady doesn't want to be my mother-in-law, yet she hurls cruel words at me because she isn't." Jimmy sighed, and then, flashing his ingratiating smile, optimistically asserted: "Aw, well, a man who can shut his eyes, fold his arms and tell whether a gasoline engine has appendicitis or only cramp colic, needn't hunt long for a job. Trust me—"

"I did," exploded Mrs. Murphy, her ire suddenly blazing. "Beat it, now, and don't show me yer face again till it's plastered with greenbacks, or I'll call a copper."

Somewhat dejected, Jimmy Dimon removed himself from Mrs. Murphy's premises to the Capitol grounds and dropped upon a bench. There, something he saw in a newspaper abandoned by the bench's former occupant, brought back the twinkle to his eyes and the humorous pucker to his mouth. He read:

"Please, Your Majesty, may I have a cup of icewater?" begged the shade, who on earth had been a famous philanthropist.

"Certainly," suavely replied Satan. "I'll furnish half a cup—if you will raise the other half."

"My pickle exactly," ruefully declared Jimmy.

He dropped the paper and took from his pocket Edith's letter. Once more he perused the disturbing missive.

"The substance of it is that I can have my old job as foreman at Alsberger's, provided I report in person by six o'clock this evening," he muttered, returning the epistle to its en-

velope. "On top of that is the ultimatum of Edith's mother, that if I am not settled in a permanent job with a satisfactory salary attached before they leave for California, at 10:30 to-night, our engagement will be everlastingly smashed to smithereens."

Jimmy's lips attemped their whimsical smile and achieved the expression sometimes seen when a man is enduring a minor surgical operation without an anæsthetic.

"I don't blame Mrs. Brown. I've made three flivvers with my darned patents; and Edith has waited two years. Bless her staunch little heart! She doesn't care any more than I do. I have been trying to lasso a million for her. Maybe, though, she would rather have thirty-five a week—every week. All right, then. PROPOSITION: Get to Greenmont, or get the mitten. RESOLUTION: No gloves wanted. QUESTION: How? The last train leaves Denver at 3:15 this afternoon, and the fare is ninety-five cents. I haven't a penny, no one to borrow from and nothing left to pawn. There isn't time to walk or beat it on a freight."

Bent over, elbows upon his knees and fingers interlocked across his forehead, Jimmy stared at the newspaper lying between his feet.

" Certainly," suavely replied Satan. "I'll furnish half a cup—provided you raise the other half."

"Darn you, Mr. Devil, I'll take that cup," gritted Jimmy. "Get your half ready."

Still staring at the newspaper, these lines attracted his attention:

President Widcoe of the Mountain States Trust Company emphatically denies that his institution is involved. He states that the rumors afloat yesterday in the financial district were started by one of his personal enemies.

"Bet the reports are true," grunted Jimmy. "Widcoe is so crooked he treads on his own heels. Gee! The first time I was in Denver people thought he was another Pierp Morgan, plus wings and a halo. I believed it myself and opened a savings account in the M. S. T. Put in a dollar—and stopped."

An idea jarred Jimmy upright.

"If that dollar isn't in the M. S. T. yet, I'll eat my hat!" Then he slumped to his former attitude, head in hands. "But where's my book? Can't draw the money without the book. Let's see. I had it when I landed here on this last wild goose chase. Where did I—oh, I remember!"

So saying, Jimmy leaped from the bench and headed at a hurried gait for Mrs. Murphy's.

"No matter what I told her she wouldn't let me go up and look," he reflected, en route. "If I sneak in, and she catches me, she'll call a policeman, but I'll have to risk it."

He took out his key ring.

"This pass key fits the lock on my door and the front door is always open. At one o'clock Mrs. Murphy will be back in the kitchen eating lunch."

Swiftly, silently, Jimmy let himself into No. 29. Quickly he darted to the dresser and lifted out the bottom drawer. There, upon the dusty cross brace, lay his book. He was replacing the drawer when he heard approaching footsteps.

"Sure an' it's a lovely room, twenty-nine is," sounded Mrs. Murphy's

heavy tones. "Leave me show ye."

"Whee-oo!" breathed Jimmy, dashing across the room and throwing up the sliding screen. "From battle, demolition and death by Mrs. Murphy's broom, the fire-escape shall deliver me. Hurrah for the building laws!"

From the tail end of the line at the paying teller's window, Jimmy sized up that official.

"Bilious, bad-tempered and shifty-eyed," ran his verdict. "Maybe he wouldn't steal from a blind man, but he'd enjoy upsetting the tin cup and watching the poor cuss grope for the scattered pennies."

The nearer Jimmy drew to the window, the lower sank his volatile spirits, which the finding of the book had sent soaring to extravagant heights.

"That guy would stop a widow's pension," soliloquized he, as the teller curtly directed a shabbily dressed woman to step out of line and rewrite a check whose form was not correct to the last i-dot and t-cross. "Orders, probably. The M. S. T. may need the money. Everybody seems to be drawing out and nobody putting in."

Came Jimmy's turn at the window.

"In bills of small denomination," he gravely specified, presenting his book and a check for the one dollar credited therein.

Far from responding to the pleasantry, the shifty-eyed money changer disdained even to look at the author of it.

"Where is the pocket savings bank that was issued to you?" he asked, after inspecting the book.

"Why—oh, that little tin doodad? Thunder! I lost it," said Jimmy.

"Too bad," hypocritically observed the teller. "It's charged up to you at a dollar."

"A dollar?" protested Jimmy. "Bought in quantities, it cost you not over five cents."

"I haven't time to argue the matter," snapped the teller, tossing the book into a drawer. "The bank was merely loaned to you and must be surrendered in order to close the account. Kindly step aside."

"Don't gobble," cautioned Jimmy, evenly. The twinkle left his eyes and the humorous pucker flattened to a dangerous straightness. "It's bad for the digestion. Chew a minute before you swallow another man's entire fortune."

The teller's bilious face, instead of reddening, grew yellower.

"Will you—"

"I will—take my book, as I can't have my money."

The drawer was jerked open and the book slammed into Jimmy's outstretched hand.

Propped against a customer's desk, Jimmy sounded the walls of his dilemma in search of a way out. Aside from his urgent need of the dollar, he hated to be "trimmed." He glanced at the clock and sucked in his breath whistlingly. Whatever he did must be done in sixty minutes.

"I deposited a hard-earned dollar with these three shell artists," he ruminated wrathfully, "and allowed them the use of it for four years. Now I can't even get my principal. I didn't ask 'em for interest. Interest! Say, could I draw the interest?"

To the bookkeeper's window he

walked and handed in his book.

"Credit the interest on this, please," he briskly requested.

The bookkeeper consulted his records, made the entry and returned the book.

"She works while you sleep, money does," cogitated Jimmy, returning to the writing desk.

After wasting five of his precious minutes aimlessly scribbling, he filled out a check for sixteen cents, and with the original one for one dollar, again took his place in the queue at the paying teller's window. Besides the two checks he carried a check blank, upon the reverse of which had been written twelve words.

The teller scowled at the check, he scowled at the new entry in the book, and sixteen cents clinked upon the marble.

"You don't care how I spend this?" affably inquired Jimmy, raking in the coins.

A grunt answered him.

"So glad. The sweet sixteen will pay for this," he artlessly confided, displaying the check blank with its twelve words—such startling words, they appeared to be.

"You blackmailer!" snarled the teller, his bilious countenance a mottled green.

"The Mountain States Trust Company taught me all I know of high finance," apologized Jimmy soberly.

"I ought to put you behind the bars," came in a venomous whisper through the wicket.

"Why do you mention bars?" blandly queried Jimmy, lowering his voice to a pitch inaudible to those behind him. "Do you see such things when you shut your eyes?"

The face inside the cage grew sickening to see.

"Take your dollar,"—the teller's hands trembled as he flung down a coin and snatched up the check and savings book,—"and get out!"

"Thanks. You may have the sixteen cents to cover the pocket bank. That—" added Jimmy, *sotto voce*—"leaves me a jitney for a sandwich and ninety-five cents for a plush seat to Greenmont—and Edith."

A small, wiry young man with twinkling eyes and a humorously puckered mouth swung onto the rear platform of the 3:15 as it pulled out. Waving a ham sandwich for a baton he hummed, to the tune: "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts:

"Mr. Devil, don't you feel like a dime's worth of dog meat? I raised the half cup."

Between bites the young man chuckled: "That was only a want ad., and all it said was:

"FOR SALE—Savings account in the M. S. T., fifty cents on the dollar."

The Blood Rock

BY JOHN A. MacCREA

HE hand that saves sometimes destroys, and this very rock on which we sit will prove my assertion." I looked in astonishment at my guide and then at the rock.

A huge slab of red granite it was, rectangular in shape, with a flat top worn smooth from serving as a seat for many weary pack-laden men. The rock was streaked with deep dark blotches, giving it the appearance of a sacrificial altar dripping with the blood of its victims.

"Yes," continued Hermos, "if this old rock could speak it would tell the story of a woman's perfidy and the destruction of two souls." I knew my guide well enough to remain silent and quietly handed him a cigar.

He slowly examined the gold band, and after a few moments' silence applied a match and leaned back to enjoyment and the telling of his story.

"A matter of some thirty odd years ago, when I was a Hudson Bay runner, my mate, who relieved me of my mail bag at that little settlement below the ridge, which in those days was one of the farthest north trading posts of the Hudson Bay Company, was Antwain St. Clair. A strange mixture he was, of Scotch, Indian and French, but a man he was, every inch of him—six foot two in his moccasins and built like a watch.

"Him it was who took the Jew pedlar and held him up at arm's length; ay, as one would pluck a flower, he plucked him from the ground and held him aloft and carried him away from his tormentors. Him it was who could lift a barrel of pork from the ground into a tote wagon, using but the forefingers of his hands.

"His greatest feat was the lifting of,—but that is getting ahead of my story and is the marrow of it,—a story which even the telling, after a lapse of more than thirty years, quickens my pulse and sets me to wondering how a man as gentle as a woman, with no thought of malice or hatred in his heart, could be changed in an instant into a cool, calculating murderer,—a murderer who, with infinite pains, wove a net to ensnare his victim, dug a pit, and having ensnared him, leaped with him into eternity.

"Valarie Clement, the Factor's daughter, was a woman good to look upon. Straight she was as the young poplars which line yon ridge, bright and winsome she was; one whom the good God created to minister to and love some man. But, methinks, the evil one added a dash when he gave her blue eyes and coal black hair, for the combination was irresistible, and the beauty of Valarie Clement was talked of around camp-fires from Keenora to the Rockies.

"It remained, however, for St. Clair to carry off the prize, and when the wedding took place, over a hundred

dog teams were gathered around the post and we made merry for three whole days.

"The young couple settled in that tiny log cabin below the clearance there to the west, and for one of them, at least, heaven on earth began, for never was there a man so happy as St. Clair. He resumed his duties as mail carrier, and his trips kept him away from home for four days out of the week.

"A few months after the marriage, as near as I can remember, St. Clair returned from his trip one day with an unconscious man strapped to his sleigh. And thus, as the Good Book says, the snake entered Eden.

"The stranger was a tenderfoot from Ottawa, whose sleigh and dogs had gone through the ice and been lost, and who only escaped a similiar fate through the timely arrival of St. Clair, who waded and swam through the icy water and dragged the stranger to safety.

"The shock and exposure to the tenderfoot brought on a fever, and for weeks the stranger tossed and moaned in the shadow of death, watched and nursed by St. Clair's wife.

"Slowly he won his way back to strength and how it happened no one knows; what she saw in the puny Curtin no one knows; for beside her husband he was but a boy, and poor and undersized. But the ways of a woman are beyond us all. They fell headlong in love, but the discovery did not come for a long time and it might never have come but for an accident.

"For St. Clair to doubt Valarie was to doubt God, but a broken snowshoe bringing him back unexpectedly, the truth was brought to him with crushing force as he saw Valarie, his Valarie, in Curtin's arms.

"Apparently the man's very nature was changed by the shock and from that instant his whole aim and thought was revenge—revenge on the man who had deceived him and stolen that which he valued more than life. He entered the house noisily and showed no indication of his discovery in the hearty greeting which he gave both his wife and his guest.

"St. Clair resumed his trips. The winter passed and the Spring approached. Still the stranger lingered, completely enamoured of the woman and apparently never for a moment realizing the volcano above which he was living. Finally, when the last vestige of snow had disappeared and the magic wand of summer had clothed the ugly rocks and jagged tears in the earth's surface made by the sliding ice, St. Clair prepared to net his victim.

"He returned one day apparently greatly elated and maintained an air of great mystery. After the supper dishes had been cleared away he motioned for both of them to draw close to the table and after looking cautiously around, produced a wrinkled and worn piece of deerskin which had the appearance of great age and bore upon its surface what appeared to be a rude chart or map. This chart, he explained, had been given to him by a dying Indian whom he had befriended. The dying man, he asserted, had told him that over a hundred years before, his tribe had washed an immense amount of gold dust

and nuggets from the bed of the stream and buried the treasure. The map, St. Clair said, explained exactly where the treasure lay and he had, after much searching, located the cache under the red rock on which we are now seated.

"Valarie and Curtin were wild with desire to unearth the gold and the wronged husband smiled a grim smile as he intercepted the glances the two gave each other.

"Thus far, my friend, my story is from actual knowledge of the facts. The remainder is pieced out from the accounts of different people who were present when the curtain was rung down on the grim tragedy.

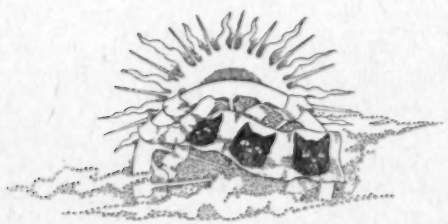
"As the three looked over the worn plan on the table before them, what thoughts flitted through their minds no man can tell, but finally, apparently yielding to the enthusiasm of his wife and Curtin, St. Clair agreed to endeavour to discover the treasure that very night.

"Pickaxes and shovels were hastily procured and the three hastened to this very place and St. Clair prepared to spring his trap. With his enormous strength, assisted by Curtin, he managed to raise the edge of this stone and prop it up with a stout sapling. He and his victim then crawled under and began to dig,—one for treasure, the other, the grave of the man he hated.

"What actually occurred no one knows. Whether words of reproach were spoken or not will never be known. Suffice it that the valley was awakened by the shrieks of a half-crazed woman, and on hurrying to the scene, found her in a dead faint and a thin stream of blood trickling from underneath the stone.

"And now you thing, my friend, that St. Clair's vengeance was barren, but greater than he had a hand in that. Although two souls perished, one was saved and purified as by fire. Valarie has since been the angel of the valley. Hush! here she comes now."

I turned and saw a sweet face framed in snow-white hair,—a face that shone with purity and love,—a face that had suffered and had triumphed.



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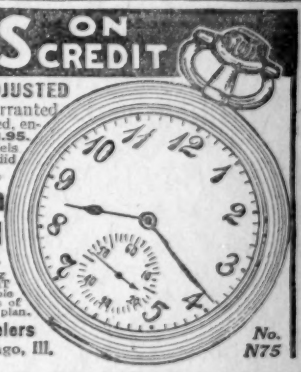

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